



beyond control  
& amnesia,  
**IMPOSSIBLE BRILLIANCE IS THE  
HEART OF IMAGINATION AND JOY**  
**WHEN WE STAKE OUR EARTHLY  
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EMBRACE  
OF FLUXES WE ARE AND THE  
EXPERIENCE OF SELF AT OUR  
CORE.**

NOWHERE LESS

OTHER STORIES HAVE FAILED US

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# WE ARE NOT AFRAID OF THEIR RUINS... WE CARRY A NEW CHAOS IN OUR HEARTS



Inmates of Swaleside prison (Isle of Sheppey, U.K.), amongst the destruction of a wing during rioting 23.12.16; during a 26-day wave of prison unrest including the largest uprising for over 25 years (600 inmates of HMP Birmingham defeating multiple riot squads and burning the Offender Managing Unit with £6million damages, and attacking screws and setting fire to CCTV cameras at HMP Hull): this September another wing of HMP Birmingham was severely damaged in more disorder

[ed. – Written before the eventual passing of reforms to the Penal Code in the Spanish State, by the anti-psychiatry collective Asamblea de Majaras. In addition to its impact on those considered mentally 'unstable', it legalised abandoning imperiled migrants off the Mediterranean coast to their fate at sea, raised formerly-considered petty theft to a higher level of punishment, and upheld the life sentence. It passed beside the better-known 'Gag Law' that significantly constricts protest acts and underhandedly 'reduces' low-end jailable offenses to automatic crippling fines (thus increasing control while appearing less authoritarian by reducing jailings). We have nothing more to add to this text – which says nothing new, but is written with a lot of heart – except that we have taken the liberty during translation of amending the places where our social enemies are addressed as a "you": while we empathise with the need for cathartic expression, we don't direct dialogue towards those we aim to negate, even as a poetic exercise. The authors can contact us if they want to talk about this.]

## MACROCOSM: THE SURFACE CREATURES

Once upon a time an old country was scraped down to its bones while a new country was fashioned from the scraps of other ones from across the seas. Square fields and then square lawns held everything anyone could possibly want, and much more. Within only a few hundred years, vast stretches of artificial lighting would make the night sky safe: *Nothing slithers, nothing crawls under here!*

**And yet not everyone handled the transition well, then or now.** What was the meaning of a life spent in squares? Some fell ill, in various ways, and called out for help.

But the medicine people were long gone by then. Called alternately or overlappingly traditional healers, shamans, wortcunners (knowers of herbs), midwives, wise women, witches and other things depending on language and tradition, these were the wild ones who dwelt beyond village and hedgerow, at the edges of jungles and mountain hollows. Their conceptions of the world included nuanced sound and odor, creatures above and below, portals inner and outer. Their medicines came from stone and root and flower and meal and touch and prayer.

Naturally the medicine people were some of the first to be suppressed, as always, no matter the continent.

**And so new kinds of medicine people had to be developed in the new country, the kind who could think in squares,** to stitch together the people's minds and hearts. The first psychologists formed an abstract mental medicine they called New Thought.

Inharmonious thoughts, they said, were the source of all disease. This was in line with the dominant religious sects of the time, so New Thought looked a lot like old Calvinism [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg23]. In either case, emotional spontaneity of any kind was extremely suspect.

The people themselves, then, were the source of their problems, not living in squares. To have healthy minds, they must think better thoughts.

They must make their hearts small and predictable and ladylike.

**The New Thought fad passed, but not its main features, which soon enough formed the backbone of what became known as the self-help and mental health fields.** Herein one constantly examines one's inner life for incorrect or negative thoughts and hedonistic emotional excesses, especially in the case of positive and cognitive-behavioral psychologies [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg14]. In the popular culture, even cruder New Age-type tenets, in which bad things such as disease happen due to incorrect personal vision, still reign.

**Chemically and/or mechanically suppressing negative thoughts and feelings has become almost a national religion,** thus returning us full circle back to Calvinism. The poor are poor, for instance, because poverty is all they strive for. In this land every negative thought, feeling or circumstance is ultimately one's own fault.

And so the people never did learn to fully touch or see their own grief, their anger over living in squares. There is no cultural container for a longing for the wild within and without. Strong emotions are supposed to play out on screens, not through bodies, unless they are bodies shown on screens.

This Imbolc<sup>[1]</sup> season let us begin to reclaim our wild interiors, our sadness, our anger, our irritability, our depression and disease and disease. Let us start here in the long reclamation of the wilds without, knowing that refusal of grief and death refuses also sensuality and rebirth.

We proclaim from our madness, rebellious and contagious, that we don't care about the penal codes and their reforms because we do not believe in their laws or in their disorders.

Since we were born we have lived in turmoil and subjected to the rule of law, the family, religion, medicine, school, work, husband, father, state... and disobeying them all, and for that reason they have labeled us with their despicable assortment of incurable and chronic diseases.

They condemn us for life even before we are born, and we will continue shitting on their scientific, political, economic, social and religious truths, because obedience and submission are the only true diseases.

We began a long tormented journey in which we were torn from our natural environment to join the system of a world to which we do not want to adapt. We will always be uneasy, unstable, critical,

1. ed. – Part of the Wheel of the Year annual cycle of festivals observed by some modern Celtic-inspired pagans; the first cross-quarter day following Midwinter (varying considerably in name and date depending on the group celebrating it).

irritating, miserable, emotional, passionate, restless, resistant, distracted, loving, hyperactive, overflowing... and warriors, because we will not give up germinating our madness in the face of the blackmail and emotional conflicts with which they want to domesticate us and the permanent confrontation between us and them.

We are sick with a dark bile of rage that stirs like a storm against all those who feel safe and secure in this uncertain world that, day by day, destroys us. They contaminate the air we breathe with sulfur and uranium. The waters of the rivers are increasingly toxic due to their heavy metal slag discharges. Their emissions of dioxides, methane and fluorinated polluting gases are suffocating and burning nature and putting at risk the survival of all animals, human or non-human, and plant beings. They covered the planet with a thick skin of toxic black paste and surrounded the territory with rail tracks, highways, metal fences, concrete walls, high voltage towers and barbed-wire fences... separating us from our siblings and neighbors and filling the atmosphere with electromagnetic radiation. They keep the mountains seriously ill from wounds opened by quarries, mineral extraction and deforestation. They imprison non-human animals to die in industrial farms, and they enlist us in industrial centers of penitentiary exploitation. They bomb civilian populations in the name of freedom, justice and democracy, plundering entire countries for questioning their hegemonic model of capitalist, white, patriarchal, western and Christian life, leading thousands of people into the blind alley of their misery, destruction and death.

And it is they, the self-proclaimed guardians of the freedoms of the world, of this destructive world order that is nothing new, who consider us "crazy" and "dangerous subjects" to justify our gags, the pharmacological straitjackets, the confinement to perpetuity and the death sentence. Our "madness" is not fooled by the modern designs of the democratized chemical lobotomies and shock therapies that they use as torment and torture in the most bloody of dictatorships... *because they fear us.*

They, those who throw us out of our houses, those who after exploiting us in their factories force us into unemployment. They, those who determine who has more "right" to live in a territory that is not theirs and in which they can only maintain their privileges by the harsh repression and by the destructive capacity of the weapons of their armies... *They fear us.*

They, the ones who subject human groups to a suffocating State of Exception [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg5*], surveilling each of their gestures and imposing the control of a police state... *They fear us.*

They, who deny our right as women to decide on our bodies, at the same time that they violate the bodies of the indigenous or those that they consider "less valid" with sterilization [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg29*]... *They fear us.*

They enclose us in their stale and tormented religious morals, they decide for us what our desires must be and they conceive no other reality than the model of duality. They impose their dogma that we can only experience ourselves as men or women and that only then can we love and desire ourselves, when the realities of our drives are much broader and more beautiful and are not determined by their prejudices. They have no scruples to sign treaties on the rights to sexual freedom, but then they impose their psychiatric treatments to eradicate our "transsexuality" and submit us to surgeries that shape us to the hegemonic binomial of a desire that we do not feel.

They are the same ones who sign grandiose treaties and conventions on human rights of the child, affirming the obligatory nature of schooling, then deny them food. Children can die of malnutrition and hunger but *with compulsory education*, because they do not care that there are no fundamental principles that guarantee the feeding of the smallest and most needy creatures, only their training and control. It is they who go with humanitarian aid to invade those countries where the infant mortality rate is alarming, and to take their wealth in exchange for leaving all their poisons.

This humanitarian aid is their alibi for the looting, the plunder, the torture, the rape of the women and the destruction that they themselves will later rebuild according to their order. **As in the past, they keep leaving their trace of pain and desolation wherever they go.** They are the lords of death, those who invent pathologies to prescribe harmful palliative drugs. They claim to cure more and more diseases and they chronify our agony making us dependent on their medicines, their merchandise, the compulsive and unrestrained consumption that treasures property as a privileged inalienable right and not as the theft, looting or plundering of humanity.

They condemn us to a brutalizing leisure that reproduces their miseries and estranges us. We are sick because of their constant violence in all areas of our lives. We are sickened and exhausted by exploitation and by each of their moral and heteronormative prejudices. We are sick because of the deep discomfort caused by the daily alienation of a life that estranges.

They have the world in their hands and they will have our bodies bound but they will never manage to appropriate our will. Our convictions are solid and firm, and we

know that we are facing a disproportionately unequal struggle, but we will uphold our dreams and we will take not a step back. **That is why they fear us.** They are afraid of the overflowing wrath of the miserable. They are afraid of the implacable look of our rage. And that is why they are going to impose this new reform of the penal code behind the backs of the people and against the people, but not a thousand reforms, nor all the laws that fit in their miserable dreams, will silence our voices, nor exhaust our desire to fight against the epidemic of their culture of death.

It is we, the dispossessed, against them, the possessors. Their fear is reflected in each law; our blood is ignited and when they spill it, they will burn along with their world. We are children of a dignified revolution that germinates in memory and we will not forget, nor forgive.

We know that this autumn they will approve a new reform of the penal code. Another reform with which they want to gag and lock us up, without the ropes that bind us or the walls of the cells being seen. This reform is not just against us the crazy, the women, the transsexuals, the migrants, the resistant, the precarious... It is against all the people who defend ourselves from their greed and their unlimited abuses. It is against all the people who are aware that no government is going to bring us freedom. Their laws are against all those people who recognize that only we can decide on the destiny of our lives, and not the markets, the financial entities, the economic or political interests, the reasons of State...

In front of each of their repressive measures, we will remain firm and disobedient before all eventualities. Our resistance will stop being that of survival, to become a transforming struggle that will defend its spaces of freedom side-by-side. We will feel a lot of fear in front of their armies of thugs and hired mercenaries, but our courage, our determination, our desire to live in freedom, the mutual support and solidarity of our sisters and brothers, will help us **overcome all our fears.**

They can start building more prisons, asylums and gas chambers right now, because the earth will be too small.



Image from a flyer left at the site of an arsoned church construction in Peru, 11.06.11: "Family / School / Work / Psychiatry / Church – DESTROY WHAT DESTROYS YOU"

# HONOR AMONGST THIEVES

[ed. – From a two-part series 'At Your Service: Tales from Community Service', from [thesituationlondon.wordpress.com/](http://thesituationlondon.wordpress.com/).]

I'm going to dive straight in, it doesn't really matter how I got to this moment; from the hands of thugs in blue uniform, to the loving embrace of the sham judicial system weighted against the poor/non white and indeed anyone who doesn't fit the citizen factory's standard model, through the hands of a lazy probation office more concerned about why I identify as gender- and sexuality-queer than my welfare, broken wrist or what work I'd like to do; and finally into a council estate in Sydenham (South London) where I'm expected to clean railings for seven hours a day with one half-hour break and a theoretical further two fifteen minute fag breaks for no money whilst some middle aged, wannabe screw gets on my case every time I miss a spot.

I arrive at five to nine, and spend ten minutes looking for the room that we're supposed to be in; by the time I find it it's about ten past nine – today's particularly jobsworth supervisor decides that time will be taken off my hours and I will therefore have more to complete. Suddenly there is an explosion, five guys (two of them literally jumping out of their seats) start kicking off, fighting MY corner, telling the fucking supervisor that I don't deserve to lose 15 minutes from my days work and that they should give me a break. After about ten minutes the arguing subsides and low and behold by the end of the day I've been given my full time – this is the vein my day begins in, I feel like one of the tribe.

**Flash forward a day or two and I'm at another site in another part of the city sat under the shade of a tree, all of us (there are 4) convicts sharing a spliff and talking about our various crimes.**

I feel more at home here than I have in a long time, we take it in turns to watch each others backs, pick up the slack of the guy rolling the spliff, and cover for each other when someone wants to sneak off to the shop (an offense that can get you sent home, and therefore breached which means going back to court and potentially facing prison). Everyone here is friendly and helpful, of all the guys I've met on these "projects" not one has done any harm to an individual – all us are victims of a system that targets us for our

poverty, ethnicity, or lack of complicity with our own oppression/refusal to assimilate.

Like in the workplace, or the community, organizing happens through a series of friendships, and through organization we are stronger. Similarly to the workplace our organization is most apparent when we are in opposition, when we must fight for our survival, when we come into direct conflict with the authorities that are enslaving us. When a supervisor attempts to send one combatant home for not working quickly enough, our collective action, our friendship, and our realization of what this would mean enable us to combat effectively the wishes of the supervisor (who in this case has no understanding of the loneliness and alienation of the court room, the bias of the judge, or the reality of the prison) and protect our comrade through the threat of non compliance.

**Isolation is a parasite. In the footsteps towards our current situations, each of us was singled out, plucked from the homogeneous mass by the camera, the state thug, the security guard, the ticket barrier, the bank; isolated from our friends, our comrades, our lovers (physically in the cell, the prison, the courthouse, and mentally in so far as our charges, our convictions are our individual crosses to bear), and attempted to be individualized, demonized and disconnected. In finding each other, in sharing our stories and in experiencing struggle together we come a step closer to liberating ourselves both from our physical situations and our subconscious labels as outcasts; our high visibility jackets become a symbol of our brotherhood [sic] where they were intended to mark us out, to other us, and power shifts back into our favor, away from the hands of those who oppress us.**



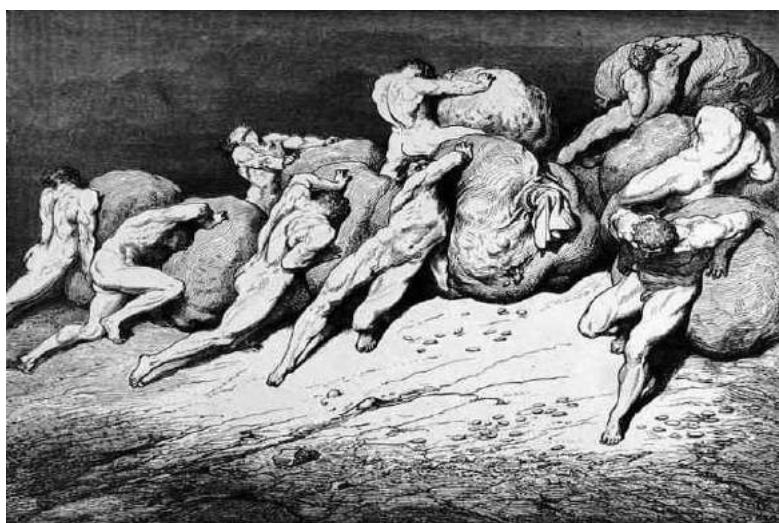
"Judgement does not come suddenly; the proceedings gradually merge into the judgement."

– Franz Kafka

Friendship sticks; there is honor amongst thieves. **Many friendships form from our "projects" which extend beyond the parameters of the seven hour days in which we are forced together.** Many combatants drive each other to and from the days slavery, we socialize after "work" and we learn more about each others situations, we build solidarity, we advise each other on claiming benefits, personal security against state intrusion, and on basic methods of survival in the face of capital. Together we make each other stronger.

**And then the state strikes me a blow.** The phone rings: "Hello Mr / Mrs / n/a \_\_\_\_\_, I'm just calling from the control centre to tell you that you have been redirected to an A.P placement<sup>[1]</sup>; from now on you will be working X/Y/Z day in a charity shop; you will be the only community payback member at this placement." End call. I protest to every level of authority, but that's just the problem: I am forced cap in hand as an isolated individual to the feet of my oppressor, without my fellow combatants to back me up I inevitably lose my battle and I'm shunted to the charity shop a few miles from my home. It's OK there (at the shop), the days are easier and as an individual I'm treated more fairly by those who own the rights to my body for seven hours a day

than on the "projects", but I'm isolated and alone in my struggle against my detention. I find some solace in my sisters, brothers, and gender-fuckers enslaved on the workfare program<sup>[2]</sup> (what we share is of course that our bodies are the property of someone else, and our labour does nothing to improve our material conditions) who are similarly the victims of their own low economic status; but it is not the same, because whilst our



struggle is not connected; we are not organizing for the same freedoms or against the same oppression.

After my first day I call up a friend from one of my old projects. I discover that they too have been moved onto an A.P placement and are finding the adjustment similarly hard. We hang out and we chat about it, and we conspire to fight it, and we vent; but our ability to act in solidarity with each other has ultimately been stripped from us and it is hard to feel that same feeling of camaraderie when we are not fighting shoulder to shoulder any more.

**I continue to meet my fellow combatants from the “service” of the terrible community, and I will continue to do so;** the state can not take that away from us. I will continue to talk with them, to share with them, and to publish with them tales from our enslavement; we will never surrender.

My advice to anyone about to start on the community payback program would be to try your dammed hardest to get on a project, not an AP placement. You can help this process along, by answering your initial assessment questionnaire (which will be done by your case manager) in a way that makes it seem like you may need supervision. If they think you are likely to steal anything (bring up previous convictions or fixed penalties for theft if you have them), hurt yourself or anyone else or anything similar to this, you will almost certainly have to be put on a “project”. Good luck to all future combatants.

1. AP or agency placement means a program of work that is not directly supervised by Serco *fed.* – international corporation involved in probation schemes and other parts of the U.K. detention estate/the state; it is outsourced to a charity or other organization who feels it can benefit from our slave labour in order to lower its running costs and maximize profit; from Serco's point of view these placements are gold-dust since they reduce staff costs massively (taking away the need for supervisors, much of the infrastructure etc) and from the state's point of view they are a perfect tool in isolating, alienating, and reducing our power; if we don't see each other we can't organize.

2. For more info on workfare see [johnnyvoid.wordpress.com](http://johnnyvoid.wordpress.com) & [boycottworkfare.org](http://boycottworkfare.org)

## MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

*“The psychiatrist concluded her evaluation: “I would consider this individual incorrigible. He has much hostility in him for being poor and seems to have an unending reservoir of energy. This type of habitual criminal neither profits from experience nor punishment. He can only work against society and thereby derive power, and he will always be able to find followers whom he can impress with his intelligence and destructive drives. He will never be able to work within society. Diagnosis: sociopathic personality, antisocial type.”” – Joseph Wambaugh, ‘The Onion Field’*

It's already here, under the carpet, behind the sofa; the pedo, the bogeyman, those outlaws out there... Not in our home! Not in our English castle! Not our children! Send them to army cadets, think about revisiting church... look! Another royal baby, royal wedding, anything to distract us from the risk of the unknown, so we don't have to question our own comfort zone...

*It's behind you! It's behind you! No it's fucking not. It stinks, it's right under the bridge of your nose. Here's how it goes: Mr Acceptable is Mr Scared, Mr Scared never dares to do what he wants, Mr Scared becomes Mr Compromise, Mr Compromise just goes along with everyone else, Mr Compromise eventually becomes Mr Very Frustrated who turns into Mr Bitter who sees himself as Mr Hard-Done-By, without looking their relationship to the rest of the world, so Mr Misinformed goes quietly about his business, piling shit on top of shit, never really thinks and trips on every obstacle that comes their way, then when their life comes to an end, they're still in a muddle and can't decide whether they're just Mr Ordinary or Mr Blind! So they die as Mr Confused! There is no moral to this short passage because Mr Mediocre never saw himself as anything less or anything more than Mr Ordinary so had nothing of real value to say.*

We are slowly dying. Some of us are content and contain ourselves with punching out our own eyes, going blind and fading away. Some of us are never grateful, always asking why; stifled artists who want to see things a different way, like punching out windows to see if anyone will wake up! Turn on the light!

We end up doubting ourselves and our own assessment of what we feel is desirable. Glued to the spot, angry but unable to take action, forced to anesthetise the situation... self-harm

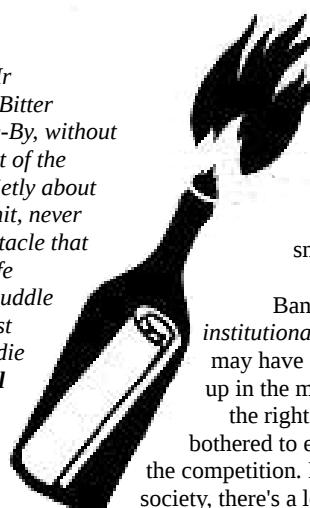
instead of state-harm. We internalise the misery nationally, state of the nation, “it's your round John innit? I'll have another Guinness.”

Do we live fake lives? We wake up and the sun's shining, we are happy. No, wrong, we wake up, we take a happy pill, yeah now the sun's shining. We drag ourselves to jobs that don't mean a thing to us; we do it because it brings in the cash, it is the only equation we have worked out to survive so far.

If we crave violence because our emotions are not being fulfilled, we can have virtual reality or some other simulation, and there's war reenactment tailored to business-as-usual. We can see nudity everywhere except out there in the streets, in our day-to-day lives; we can watch porn, maybe we can have sex, but is that the only level of connection? **Are people emotionally involved anymore? Is there any reason to be?** Are people connected, is there any community? Do we just sit in the pub or club and try to hear each other speak over the music and drunken voices, does it feel worth competing in the struggle to communicate? Where can we meet to try to build meaningful

relationships, instead of shallow acquaintances, where we live so separate from each other in our propped-up fantasy worlds? Where are people in their thirties; too scared to let their hair down?!

Given up? Sat in the corner snogging Facebook?



Banksy *fed.* – quasi-institutionalised Bristol graffiti artist] may have said some people just don't get up in the morning, they just don't have the right trainers; so they haven't bothered to enter the rat-race. They ignore the competition. In the commerce of daily society, there's a lot of people that are seen as drop-outs, but there are some of us even though conventionally crushed we have risen in our own field, to claim our own little bit. Because some of us know what is possible, the days when inside us we stride like giants in the knowledge that despite of all their security measures we are still able to lift our fists and strike their apparatus... even though we know inside we are not giants. Maybe fleas... difficult to find...

(G4S) warning this vehicle sometimes contains ANTI-SYSTEM SMART ROBBERS



# NEW TECHNOLOGIES, EXTRATERRESTRIAL EXPLOITATION & THE FUTURE OF CAPITALISM

[ed. – Translated from Catalan; a continuation of the work started by Distri Josep Gardenyes in an earlier text 'A Wager on the Future', a very incisive analysis of (among other things) changes in the property regime enforced by contemporary capitalism's cutting edge, as well as the futher-reaching colonisation of our imaginaries achieved by the above; expect excerpts in future volumes of *Return Fire*. Currently, the U.S. Government is preparing to revive the directive for a permanent American base on the moon to build to eventual missions to Mars; also, as 2017 draws towards its close, talk of weaponising space has also been back on their agenda, contrary to the treaty cited below.]

One of the themes mentioned in "A Wager on the Future" that was received with skepticism or even laughter was the affirmation that the colonization of outer space might be the only exit capitalism has from the crises it has generated.

We wanted to begin 2017 by dedicating a little more attention to this affirmation.

2017 is the year of Google's Lunar X Prize, through which the North American corporation (as important to 21st century capitalism as Ford was to 20th century capitalism) is offering \$20 million to the first company that manages to send a landing craft to the moon, drive 500 meters, and transmit high-resolution images back to Earth. But they have to do it this year. And there are already various teams that are getting ready to meet the challenge<sup>[1]</sup>.

One of which is Moon Express, which has already become the first company in history to receive legal permission, from the US government in this case, to carry out commercial exploitations on the moon's surface. If this team makes it to the moon – and they already have the necessary financing and a schedule of test launches – they won't only win the Prize, they will also drop off a commercial payload that represents the first step in setting up an equipment delivery service to the moon, which will make the lunar mining of Helium-3 (a valuable fuel for nuclear reactors) feasible.

Another company, Planetary Resources, claims that the mining of metals and water on asteroids could be a trillion dollar business. For them, water (and the hydrogen it contains, which could be used as spaceship fuel) is "the oil of space." These are not empty words. Planetary Resources is another company that has a business plan and the technology needed to begin carrying out the mining it envisions.

On the 14th of January, Space X returned to space. It's one of the companies of Elon Musk (who is also preparing self-driving



Castelo Branco, Portugal, 08/09/10: wreckage of a €3 million arson that destroyed all machinery and materials on the site of testing for the heat-resisting coating of the first ESA European Space Agency space shuttle; the only institute carrying out such testing at that time

cars for commercial sale; the technology already works and the only obstacles are the legal regulations), the billionaire whose personal crusade is the colonization of Mars in the next two decades. Space X fixed a design flaw in its rockets and on the 14th made an effective launch, deploying 10 commercial satellites from the same rocket, which, subsequently, returned automatically to Earth, landing on a Space X drone ship waiting – with its entirely robotic crew – in the Pacific Ocean. The autonomous and reusable rockets (one could say, *environmentally friendly*) are one of the foundations of Musk's plan for reaching Mars in a commercially feasible way. He has already developed a business plan for developing the technology and acquiring the resources needed to complete the mission.

These are not isolated or insignificant companies. **And the State is also paying attention to extraterrestrial colonization.** The UN Treaty on Outer Space, from 1966, holds that space and space objects cannot be armed or claimed as territory, and that any economic activity had to be peaceful and for the good of all humanity. In 2015, in the Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act, the US government clarified the legal question, establishing the legal right of private companies to exploit the moon, asteroids, and other space objects. It gives private entities the right to own and sell resources extracted from space objects, but not to possess the object outright. **In effect, they can mine the moon until it's empty, but the private companies working there with their robotic factories couldn't be considered the owners.**

The dotcom boom, which burst in 2000, shows that immense amounts of capital can be invested in companies that do not generate any profits for quite a few years before provoking a crash (in this case, it

was six years). In fact, the crash didn't come until the moment when a few new corporations showed the capacity to become profitable and productive, corporations that today are among the most powerful in the world, like Google, Amazon, and Facebook. We are at the beginning of a phase of massive investment and growth in the new sector of extraterrestrial transport and mining. The venture capitalists of this sector enjoy the advantage that the logistical foundation of their dream (everything connected with the launching of satellites, with their crucial military [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg33] and commercial uses) is already in place and profitable. Similarly, Columbus didn't have to invent the long-distance ships or the navigation equipment [to begin the European colonisation of the so-called 'New World'] (which had already been developed by the Portuguese in the luxurious commercial circuits of the Indian Ocean), he just had to take them further.

**They still have a few years to yield profits with extraterrestrial extraction before the bubble bursts. If they achieve it, capitalism will once again undergo an intense growth and the moment of maximum vulnerability and maximum popular rage that the institutions now face will have passed.**

Extraterrestrial colonization is no longer a trope of science fiction. But speaking of science fiction, we must also point out the great imaginary production carried out by Hollywood and other centers of cultural work, which have redirected our gaze to the colonization of space. Since the 19th century, there have been occasional works that posed journeys beyond Planet Earth, but the current frenetic production is qualitatively and quantitatively incomparable. Its effect is not only the normalization of extraterrestrial activity, it

also accustoms us to imagine the first steps of taking our civilization and the capitalist economy beyond the Earth's gravity well.



**We are on the cusp of an event as important for the advance of capitalism and the war against life as the colonization of the Americas.** As Bob Richards, chief executive officer of Moon Express, said, *"We are now free to set sail as explorers to Earth's eighth continent, the Moon, seeking new knowledge and resources to expand Earth's economic sphere for the benefit of all humanity."*

Faced with this new reality in construction, *what are we to do?*

The fetishization of new technologies, common among certain circles of social antagonists, is the cruellest possible self-betrayal, comparable to the racist and myopic celebration of colonialism offered up by Marx and his sycophantic followers<sup>[2]</sup>.

Luddism [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg53**] need not be a rejection of “all technology” (understood as any tool that human beings have come up with in the last hundred thousand years<sup>[3]</sup>), and in fact, the first luddites, slandered by Marx and other progressives, did not reject the artisanal techniques that permitted them to maintain control over their productive activity; they rejected the technological impositions that benefited the owners and violently changed their way of life, and they rejected the police power that made such impositions possible [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg85**]. Piracy, hacking, and the readaptation of technologies is a vital current that could exist in a fertile conflict with more naturalist currents. But the populist adoration of all new technology is an acritical gesture in support of the State and capitalism.

### **A first step is the elaboration of a subversive critique, and above all a subversive practice, of the latest technological impositions on our lives.**

We are also faced with the theoretical task of conceiving how these changes will affect capitalism. As we affirmed in “23 Theses Concerning Revolt”, the property regime that defined class society is already expiring. Outer space – for example a moon without owners, but with many

exploiters – could be the ideal terrain for deploying the new regime of exploitation, based in use and access more than in property (a relation that is too stable in the eyes of financiers and the State).

Another question is that of work. Various 19th century socialists confusedly predicted that technological advances would cause the inauguration of a society of leisure and abundance. **We should not commit a similar theoretical error now.** The State invents work. Profitability is a secondary concern. Productive work in space will be overwhelmingly robotic. This is a part of the same trend towards roboticization that we see in industry on Earth. And this roboticization has not represented, at any moment, a reduction in the human labor force on a global level. It means, on the contrary, a growth of wage work in the service, care, sex work, engineering, and design sectors. The final two are the domain of privileged workers, the intellectual capital which states will increasingly compete for, the producers of the ethereal merchandise of the new economy (and here we are thinking of the employees of Google and Apple, of the old corporations that have adapted to the new economy, and of the small startups, that produce programs, aesthetics, and systems).

The other sectors – service, care, and sex work – are feminized labor that now will become more generalized. **What effect will the monetization and generalization of the previously non-remunerated labors, that yesteryear defined womanhood and patriarchal segregation, have for the patriarchy?** We will leave the answering to more perspicacious comrades [transl. – *companyes, comrades in feminine*], but in passing we can point out on the one hand the new laws in various democratic countries ceding certain rights to trans people, and on the other hand the counterattack by the patriarchal institutions within the extensive growth of the Right<sup>[4]</sup>.

**Capitalism has always depended on slavery**, but the position of slavery within productive and reproductive processes changes, often as a response to our resistance (abolition of visible slavery in the democratic countries, feminist movements, autonomous workers' struggles in automotive factories...). What yesterday was a sphere of unwaged labor, tomorrow will be waged, and vice versa. Feminine labor is pushed into the labor market and productive labor becomes unwaged once again. **But this time, the slaves are robots and their activity is one hundred percent legible, rationalized, and surveilled: under State control.** The transition will not be immediate nor homogeneous. Surely several decades will pass before timber,

chocolate, and other sectors in the poorest countries find it profitable to replace their human slaves with robots.

The tendency towards roboticization will only make undeniable our own incapacity to take over the means of production, as well as the impossibility of the proposal itself. The majority of productive workers will be robots and the others will make up the most privileged stratum of the exploited. This reality has already come into being in a large part of the field of automobile production, the industrial process that defined the previous era of capitalism. **The most modern automobile companies and the IT companies already have mostly robotic factories, fabricating products ideated by well paid engineers and designers, those highly skilled workers with multiple degrees, who see work as self-actualization, people tied to the means of production and loyal to capitalism.**



It will be even more definitive in outer space, where nearly 100% of the workforce will be robotic, mining the fuels (green energy [sic] like hydrogen cells and nuclear) that will propel the next cycle of accumulation. And that cycle will be defined as the expansion of productive circuits to a new territory: the moon, the asteroid belt, and Mars; thus preparing the terrain for the subsequent cycle of accumulation, which might involve more human labor, the terraforming and settlement of Mars (following the pattern identified by [Giovanni] Arrighi<sup>[5]</sup>, of one cycle of geographic and institutional expansion, followed by another cycle that intensifies the exploitation and control within the previously colonized terrain<sup>[6]</sup>).

The means of production *are and always have been* a machine of devastation. We do not want them and now we cannot even seriously propose their expropriation. In the 21st century, there is no other remedy but to champion and practice the recovery of artisanal knowledge and skills that put life and survival, on a healthy and natural scale, in everyone's reach. **But this path of struggle, like any other, is mined with traps.** The principal trap is commercialization. With more privileged consumers – the designers, programmers, and systems architects – more artisanal

producers can be supported, above all when the tastes of the former show a decided preference for things local and eco-friendly. **Let's take the example of agriculture.** In a near future, it is possible that energetic efficiency (how many calories of energy go into producing one calorie of food) becomes a metric for evaluating the effective use of capital. For agriculture to be more sustainable and more energy efficient, machines and petroleum would have to be substituted by more human labor. **Faced with the danger of a population with no work, capitalists, and otherwise the State, have always invented new forms of work.** And the ecological crisis is proving to be ever more serious *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg15]*. A possible solution would be for capitalism to encourage local agriculture, making use of its new capacity for decentralization. Thus, it would take giant steps towards solving the ecological crisis (created in large part by industrial agriculture), it would give employment to more people, it would offer privileged consumers a new fetish product, and it would colonize small-scale agriculture, transforming it into a *legible* commercial activity when historically it was always a source of resistance and autonomy *[ed. – see Fraud, Fantasy & Fiction in Environmental Writing/The Invention of the Tribe'Q]*. In the poorer countries, in the absence of many privileged consumers and a strong state, NGOs could take charge of this process; in fact, they already are. In the US, where the portion of the population involved in agricultural work had already dropped below one percent thanks to hyper-industrialization, this turn towards agricultural growth via small-scale production is already happening. Farmers' markets, above all in the zones of Information Technology production, have already returned from oblivion to be once again a common affair.

**The new artisanry, in order to be subversive, must be luddite, based in practices of sabotage and in illegible networks (which is to say, opaque from above) of qualitative exchange (which is to say, gift economies *[ed. – see 'Rejoin the Circle']*, like those that were practiced in the most radical collectives during the Spanish Civil War). But today, the most relevant machines for sabotage are not mechanical looms but social machines, those that mediate communication, that produce and control the networks of socialization and sociability, and that define a way of being in the world.**

We cannot continue using arguments of convenience. Capitalism is also bad in moments of expansion and wealth; capitalist technology is also bad when it

works well and doesn't provoke any specific disaster. The only path of discursive attack we have left is a direct confrontation with the Christian spirituality that science as well as socialism inherited *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg40]*: the world, the universe, do not exist for our exploitation. There is no rationalist argument (not even within the parameters of liberalism's most radical current, veganism *[ed. – see Veganism: Why Not]*) against the mining of the moon. It will not harm any human being or other animal, and according to rationalism, everything else is dead matter. The only solid arguments against capitalism's new atrocities are spiritual. They hold that the Earth is our mother *[sic]* and that we should adapt ourselves to the natural world rather than molding it according to our arrogant caprices; that filling the Earth or the Moon with holes in search of the latest valuable mineral is as unforgivable as massacring an entire people.<sup>[7]</sup> **Those who made use of scientific arguments to justify genocide, slavery, mining, and clear-cutting entire forests are the same – and their institutions are the same – as the ones who today are celebrating the imminent conquest of the moon and Mars.** And the technologies that will take us there (speaking of rockets) were developed by the Nazis in the course of the very same Holocaust that liberalism so hypocritically rejects, without ever rejecting its fruits<sup>[8]</sup> *[ed. – see A Green Anarchist Critique of Science]*. But we have been rendered homage to humanism for so long that we can no longer raise our



**Not outer space mining, but rather the moonscapes created on Earth by industrial civilisation; in this case, coal removal from below Hambacher Forest (see Return Fire vol.3 pg91)**

“On 20 July 1969, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the surface of the moon. In the months leading up to their expedition, the *Apollo 11* astronauts trained in a remote moon-like desert in the western United States. The area is home to several Native American communities, and there is a story – or legend – describing an encounter between the astronauts and one of the locals. One day as they were training, the astronauts came across an old Native American. The man asked them what they were doing there. They replied that they were part of a research expedition that would shortly travel to explore the moon. When the old man heard that, he fell silent for a few moments, and then asked the astronauts if they could do him a favour. ‘*What do you want?*’ they asked. ‘*Well,*’ said the old man, ‘*the people of my tribe believe that holy spirits live on the moon. I was wondering if you could pass an important message to them from my people.*’ ‘*What’s the message?*’ asked the astronauts. The man muttered something in his tribal language, and then asked the astronauts to repeat it again and again until they had memorised it correctly. ‘*What does it mean?*’ asked the astronauts. ‘*Oh, I cannot tell you. It’s a secret that only our tribe and the moon spirits are allowed to know.*’ When they returned to their base, the astronauts searched and searched until they found someone who could speak the tribal language, and asked him to translate the secret message. When they repeated what they had memorised, the translator started to laugh uproariously. When he calmed down, the astronauts asked him what it meant. The man explained that the sentence they had memorised so carefully meant ‘*Don’t believe a single word these people are telling you. They have come to steal your lands.*’”

– Yuval Noah Harari

**voices in protest when faced with an atrocity that lacks human victims.** But not even the contemptible people who think it is not wrong *per se* to mine the moon can deny that any introduction of new resources into the capitalist machinery will hasten the processes that are building us a prison society here on Earth.

The choice is between ecocentrism and totalitarianism.



**Lake Lleu Lleu, Chile; threatened by mining scandium for the aerospace industry, local Mapuche (see *We Can Be Worse Still*) destroyed survey antennas and mobbed the governor promoting the project, destroying his vehicle, because as the formerly-imprisoned saboteur Jose Llanquileo explains, “[we Mapuche] don’t think humans are the perfect species that can dominate all the other species [but] just a part of the world.”**

1. ed. – As of yet there is still no winner of the Lunar X Prize (despite TeamIndus from India having been tipped to win before dropping out), which since its announcement in 2007 has seen the deadline moved back multiple times; though as mentioned in the footnotes below, China landed its own spacecraft on the moon in 2013.

2. ed. – Author of 'Capital' and co-writer of 'The Communist Manifesto' with Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, in his most influential years, basically "stated that indigenous Peoples must submit to proletarianization or disappear from the world. Anyone who did not slave for a master for monetary gain was a lumpen, and Marx saw them – always the majority of the population in industrialized nations – as reactionary, enemies of the working class. He used much the same rationale we hear today from far-right racists: Lumpen want to take our jobs (scabs). They are criminals. They are no-good layabout alcoholics and drug addicts. They are whores. They are ignorant. As someone who has spent much of his adult life either homeless or in prison, but always struggling against the coercive forces of elite rule, I gotta say a big, ol' "Fuck you!" to orthodox Marxists" (Rob los Ricos). His legacy could hardly be clearer than his words: "England has a double mission to fulfill in India: one destructive, the other regenerative; the annihilation of the old Asian society and laying the material foundations of Western society in Asia." However, as an interesting and little-known side-note, Marx himself had something of a change of perspective in his later years prompted by his reading of Lewis Henry Morgan's 'Ancient Society' (and especially its depiction, rightly or wrongly, of the Iroquois of America's north-eastern seaboard) and exposed by the posthumous publication of his unfinished 'Ethnological Notebooks'; thus he tossed aside his insistence on progressive human development necessitating a chain from "primitive" indigenous, to peasant, to capitalist labourer, to socialist 'new man'. "In a note written just after his conspectus of Morgan we find Marx arguing that "primitive [sic] communities had incomparably greater vitality than the Semitic, Greek, Roman and a fortiori the modern capitalist societies?" Thus Marx had come to realize that, measured according to the "wealth of subjective human sensuality," [Iroquois society] stood much higher than any of the societies "poisoned by the pestilential breath of civilization". Even more important, Morgan's lively account of the Iroquois gave him a vivid awareness of the actuality of indigenous peoples, and perhaps even a glimpse of the then-undreamed of [by him] possibility that such peoples could make their own contributions to the global struggle for human emancipation. [...] When Marx was reading Ancient Society the "Indian

wars" were still very much a current topic in these United States, and if by that time the military phase of this genocidal campaign was confined to the west, far from Iroquois territory; still the Iroquois, and every surviving tribal society, were engaged (as they are engaged today to one degree or another) in

a continuous struggle against the system of private property and the State [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg59** and companion piece on **Colonisation**]. In a multitude of variants, the same basic conditions prevailed in Asia, Africa, parts of Eastern Europe, Russia, Canada, Australia, South America, the West Indies, Polynesia... [T]his study led him not only to dramatically and extensively alter his earlier views, but also to champion a movement in Russia [ed. – versus his previous bets on 'developed' Germany or England] that his "disciples" there and elsewhere scorned as "ahistorical," "utopian," "unrealistic" and "petty-bourgeois." Even today such epithets are not unfamiliar to anyone who has ever dared to struggle against the existing order in a manner unprescribed by the "Marxist" Code of Law" (Karl Marx and the Iroquois).

3. ed. – This is not, in fact, the only way to understand or differentiate technology (for example, see **Return Fire vol.4 pg 53**); while clearly this is a vast and complex topic needing further exploration.

4. The first occurrence recognizes, in a strictly limited way, the mutability of gender, thus contradicting one of the bases of patriarchy [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg8**]. Currently, the progressive wing of the State presents gender identity as just another consumer choice, deactivating the more conflictive elements of the transgression of gender [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; 'Yet Another Fenced World'**], but it is a contradiction that cannot be permanently maintained. As such, it is different from the reformist feminist victory in which labor and political rights for "woman" were won at the cost of losing autonomous feminine spaces, a quid pro quo that preserved the power of the institutions. In that vein, we can note that against the snail's progress of the institutionally mandated equalization of wages, the new high-paid labor that is cropping up like autumn mushrooms is squarely within the staunchly masculine information technology sector.

5. ed. – "Arrighi revises both Marx and world systems theory to define four stages of capitalism, each marked by a systemic cycle of accumulation. [Paramount to this revision is Arrighi's identification] of capitalism as a dichotomous fusion of state and capital. In this view, the State is far more important than a mere "organizing committee" for the bourgeoisie, as Marx and Engels, covetous of a state of their own, would have it. [...] Each cycle begins with the rise of a new leading state and form of institutionalized planning that organizes a global accumulation of capital, subtly interrupted by a signal crisis that heralds the switch from industrial to financial expansion, experienced as a golden age that marches inevitably to the terminal crisis when

the bubble bursts and a new state (or group of states) must take up the lead in the reorganization of global capital. [...] The alliance between the merchants of Genoa and the military power of the Spanish state organized and impelled the first global cycle of capital accumulation. The next cycle was led by the new Dutch nation-state, the architect of the interstate system or the "Westphalia system" of territorial nation-states linked in a global economy that in essence remains valid today. The third, or British, cycle of accumulation saw the mechanization of industry and the extension of the world system to every last corner of the globe through aggressive colonization. And the fourth, American cycle of accumulation saw the intensification of accumulation throughout the map laid down by the British, and the creation of the global financial and political institutions that exercise power today. [...] In essence, merchants who had long been playing a particular game amongst themselves, with exponentially mounting stakes, began to invest their profits in state-making and war-making, not merely as another industry, but as a way to produce an expansion of the field in which their accumulation took place, and to produce the instruments to organize and regulate that field. Simultaneously, ruling elites began to extend their territorialist strategies for the control of the space-of-places in which state competition traditionally took place (the conquering of territory, cities, resources) into the space-of-flows in which the merchants operated (the capturing of markets, trade routes) as a way to fuel the engine of state growth. Capitalism as an interstate system rests on a dichotomous structure that balances, in ever changing measures, territorialist and capitalist strategies for global power and organization, operating simultaneously in a space-of-places and a space-of-flows." (Anarchy in World Systems)

6. ed. – "The next cycle of accumulation, if it is to happen in any way similar to past cycles, will have to expand into outer space. A robotic workforce (resistance free) carrying out mining on asteroids and the moon, and the chemistructural development (pre- or sub-infrastructure, the organic basis already existent on earth that makes infrastructure meaningful) of Mars. (A subsequent cycle of accumulation, feasibly, would be based on colonization). Meanwhile, on an earth with new possibilities for green management (statist environmentalism has only ever come at the expense of externalizing impact, and what could be more external to the biosphere?), an expanding consumer society in an ever more capricious service sector and a highly paid design sector (with the private cities of Google and the NSA, perhaps, as the dichotomous model). [December 2013], China landed a rover on the moon. Anyone who mistakes this for an extremely tardy attempt to keep up with the Jones' is missing its significance. China has guaranteed itself access to processes of capital accumulation in space. With a space program far cheaper than the US government's, [they have become] the first country to match the US for new satellites in space, and they have also developed killer satellites and other anti-satellite weapons that could destroy all of the expensive little orbiters on which global communications, and the US capacity to deploy military force around the world, across the Pacific for example, depend. With no need to overcome US superiority head-on, just as the Dutch navy and American colonial army often used guerrilla tactics or evasion to confound a superior force, the Chinese have the potential to make US military might meaningless, and the liquid capital to give themselves the advantage in outer space investment. As higher levels (in this case perhaps literally) of competition require higher levels of collaboration, it is unlikely that terrestrial states, at least in their present form, will find themselves adequately equipped to the task of organizing capital accumulation beyond planet earth. Power structures like Google may prove vital in organizing the new material expansion and also linking the

power of terrestrial states to achieve the cultural unification necessary for the regulation and organization of capitalism. After all, the totalitarianism that liberal freedom most requires is not the secret police nor the torture chambers of the Communist Party (although these will never go away, neither in China nor in the US), it is the panopticon society [ed. see **Return Fire vol.4 pg9**], the apparatuses of communication, the instantaneous imposition of legibility on oral culture, and immediate enclosure of any new commons, that the likes of Google and Apple have already achieved [ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.4: Caught in the Net**]. If these changes come to pass – and they will to the extent that we allow them to – there will no doubt appear another wave of leftists who claim that it was all an economic operation, that the State has now expired, that capitalism is self-regulating, that the decentralized forms of production that are coming to the fore are the new reality. They willfully forget how much state power continues to concentrate, how the new decentralized industries only function in relation to unprecedented phenomena of concentration, that without drones raining missiles from the sky, there are no iPhones, that without nuclear submarines, there are no satellites, and without the State, whatever its form, there is no capitalism" (*Anarchy in World Systems*).

7. ed. – One could certainly say that mining the moon impacts other very profound relationships it has with varied plant, human (menstrual cycles being an obvious example) and other animal life, ocean tides, etc.; but we wholly agree with the need for an approach embracing what Western culture exorcises to the separated realm of the 'spiritual'.

8. ed. – As well as the many things utilised by the victorious Allies after their dismantling of the Nazi state and recruitment of many of its elements, the anarchists Silvia, Billy and Costa reminded us during their court statement when on trial for a planned attack on the laboratories of IBM in Switzerland (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg73**) of a famous example: "The German branch of IBM, Dehomag, whose publicity proclaimed in Gothic characters: "Hollerith's perforated cards allow you to see everything", traded with the Nazis as well as with the American government throughout the war. It took half a century for us to discover, thanks to the American journalist Edwin Black, the responsibilities of IBM and proto-computers in the Holocaust: "When the Nazis tried to identify the Jews by name, IBM showed them how to do it. When the Nazis wanted to exploit this information to launch the expulsion and expropriation campaigns, IBM provided the necessary means. When the trains had to run by a timetable, between cities or concentration camps, even in that case IBM showed them the way[...] The application of the Nuremberg laws was based entirely on Hollerith technology, the only one capable of establishing the genealogical trees that the Reich needed [in a short time] to identify all the half-Jews, the quarters, the eighths and even the sixteenths, with the speed and exhaustiveness hoped for. [...] IBM did not limit its business to the Germans alone, even though they were among its best customers in the 1930s. Undoubtedly convinced of the neutrality of technology, Watson, its boss, sold machines to [U.S. President] Roosevelt at the same time as Hitler.

[Three days after the attack on Pearl Harbor] the US Census Bureau could provide various reports on the Japanese population of different cities in the United States, by place of birth, citizenship, sex, etc..." Thanks to the applications IBM and the responses provided during the 1940 census, the Census Bureau had been able to determine the ethnicity of all Japanese-Americans. The American administration used the Hollerith systems to draw maps of population density by locating people by block of houses – even if the census was anonymous and without address – and "allowing to organize the movements of populations [of

Japanese origin] towards concentration camps" starting from '42." Similarly, it was Nazi concentration camps where the gene and biotechnology industries of today were first spawned in earnest, the now re-branded 'life science' companies. Just as transhumanism (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg43**) is nothing but another name for the stinking eugenics philosophy that the Nazis embraced, like Americans, Swedes and British (and more) before them.

## 'LET'S DISCONNECT THE CABLES'

[ed. – Below we reproduce a translated version of a claim (in which we take responsibility for any mistakes during our editing) for actions against one of the major new tech companies blazing a path in the new workhouse conditions and also implementation of workplace robotics, Amazon, in Berlin. So far, the pre-Christmas period of 2017 has indeed been the season for opening fire on this multinational I.T. and trading hydra: we learned of this attack at the same time as several Amazon pack stations were paralysed by unspecified means in another German city, Munich, specifying the same solidarity with the years-long struggle of Amazon workers against their working conditions, which was manifesting in nationwide Block Black Friday protests on November 24th. Meanwhile, anonymous arson wrecked a significant amount of stock on the third floor of an Amazon distribution centre in Rugeley, the English Midlands, during the crucial lead-up to the capitalist frenzy of the holiday season; the same sweatshop had a similarly mysterious fire at the same time last year. As was noted by the saboteurs of Munich; "[s]mooth logistics is the prerequisite for Amazon's 'Prime' concept of fast delivery of orders. We remain unpredictable!"]

In solidarity with Amazon's fighting workers and in support of Block Black Friday, we attacked three express vans labelled with 'AZ Amazon' and 'drs amazon' in various ways during the night of November 23rd – burned down, stabbed tires, smeared with paint, and left the call: 'strike!'

There was this side note in the media, as once again a 'terrorist' was arrested – Amazon denounces the potential terrorist customers in the search for hydrogen peroxide [ed. – for making explosives] already the next ingredients for the big bang – thanks to the algorithm...

**The basic bet of Amazon and Co. is that with all the feedback-loops, the sensors, microphones, cameras and data, you can not only add value but end up with the technological attack on your body and your actions.** There is a twofold of constantly consuming and directing on the one hand and the control and delimitation on the other: whether it be the emotion detection with cameras, which already takes place in the shops, smartphones as perceptual aids, Google Home<sup>[1]</sup> or the scary spy dolls in the nursery<sup>[2]</sup>.

Consumers of the global flow of goods are supposed to be rewarded for unsolicited emotion surveillance with personalized and controlled advertising. While on the faces of

"The end of a millenium is fast approaching and the circle will present itself again, always the same and always different. The rapid destruction of world

resources [sic] carried out by the plunderers in power is an inescapable fact. This will either be brought to an end, or it will be transformed when the included of tomorrow build one world suited to their own needs and another for the needs of others. In other words,

even the present battle against the wastage of natural resources could become an industry in the future, the

foundation of the exploitation of tomorrow. That is why we propose an immediate systematic attack on all the forms of capitalist expression, both in the backward ones still linked to rapid and irrational exploitation and the more advanced ones linked to the electronic control of the planet. In a not too distant future they will shake hands, crushing us in the middle. In order to do this we

must have the courage to look backwards as well as forwards.

Backwards to seek certain values that are no longer considered 'modern'. In this research we could single out a few elements that relate to human action: consistency, courage, respect for one's fellows (human or animal), being harsh

with oneself, frugality, a correct consideration for the environment. But others too that are only apparent in contrast: play, love, fantasy, joy, tenderness, dreams." – Alfredo M. Bonanno, 1989

all those who are up to something criminal, the tension may become apparent before the impending shoplifting or breaking away; anything out of the rut of normalization.

Amazon is at the forefront of this poker game. **Last year Amazon was the company with the most research expenditure worldwide.** So there are already test phases with supermarkets without staff. 'Amazon Go' relies on customers being registered via app when entering the store, as well as the products that are removed from the shelves – the *working customer* in the panoptic shop. So soon will also burst the service bubble, the reservoir for the countless industrial workers.

So we end up with the fighting workers of Amazon, which are already monitored in the panoptic factory at every turn by means of permanently connected with wireless devices in the warehouse.

If it is primarily about the 'optimization' of the work processes, it is about two things in the supervised supermarket: on the one hand, to reduce the costs; the working

customer, who serves themselves, boldly pays independently, and does not need service staff. **On the other hand, it's about the information which gets generated.** Who will stand in front of which shelf and how long? What emotions can be read in the pace? When do I shop happily, when I was previously depressed and slowly walked through the isle?

This is about much more than marketing and product placement, because the online giants are already making almost as much profit through sales and advertising, as with the personal data they are collecting diligently and suggesting life-saving technologies for the whole of humanity. While labour exploitation is almost on a perfect level, profits are now generated through generated data and information of the customers – through access and control of human behavioural patterns and their generated needs: the working customer.

We do not want to be governed by information – and to the satisfaction of the managers' faces, blissfully grinning at the thought of the dull masses who are storming the shops on Black Friday like controlled zombies.

So we also participate in a labour dispute, although we actually insist on vehemently refusing wage work and on trying to keep each others away from it.

### **The conflict of the striking workers at Amazon represents for us only a part of the gigantic problem of the change of the working world, the isolation of the battlefields and the isolation of the struggle.**

And also the strikers will suspect that in ten years there will be no picker and packer anymore, because Amazon is already working on computer-controlled drones to staff the warehouses.

*Let's disconnect the cables  
Let's be more than a zero and a one*

The white transporters are certainly still in your streets.

#### **– autonomous groups & others**

1. *ed. – So-called 'digital assistant', like its competitor Amazon Echo; a 'smart' device that critic John Simpson notes can "eavesdrop on everything from conversations to your toilet flushing habits to children's movements and the books on bedside tables. They would know when you go to sleep and whom you wake up with."*

2. *ed. – Presumably a reference to the "My Friend Cayla" doll, another 'smart' device (this time for children) that connects to the internet via Bluetooth and carries out conversation when asked questions; incidentally also collecting and transmitting everything it hears to a voice recognition company in the U.S. The doll is now banned in Germany, but on sale in the U.K. For more on 'Internet of Things' innovations, see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?***

## **'TOOLS OF THE TECHNOLOGY'**

The online sales (think Amazon) that are the major factor provoking the closing of shopping malls and the recession among retail giants rely on warehousing and delivery. The first is already largely roboticized, and the second is one of the prime fields for the development of autonomous and drone technology by the likes of Tesla and Amazon. Meanwhile, cashier positions in supermarkets are already being replaced by "automatic" checkout. And a few hip brand stores have started deploying what some of us were predicting when RFID tags *[ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?**]* came out: a dystopian parody of the free warehouses of the anarchist collectives in the Spanish Civil War, where anyone could just walk in and take whatever they needed. The catch, in the modern version, is that when you walk in with your mobile device, they have your bank information, so when you walk out with the products, they get deducted automatically. A shoplifting proof environment in which the potential thief is the person without a cyborg phone.

Anyways, with the roboticization of industry, which is already well under way, it was the service sector that was supposed to save the economy, creating new jobs so you still have consumers to buy all the useless, toxic shit being produced. And the service sector is still growing, but the bigger chunk of it is on the cusp of a huge decline, at the exact same moment that roboticization is on the cusp of huge steps forward in every sector, as well as a new sector, extraterrestrial exploitation, something that's discussed here.

Roboticians – experts and people who are making a huge amount of money off this shift – are actually really scared. They keep improving AI, but at the same time they're worried about how they might bring about the total collapse of the economy, an unfortunate surge in unemployment, or the obsolescence of the human species (there are different versions, the latter is Elon Musk's take). Tellingly, they keep on designing, and keep on profiting, but they're worried. This behavior belies the idea that technology is useful, that it is dependent on human will. I'll skip the debate over absolute truths for now, but in the present moment, when technology resides at the scale of the organization of human society for the satisfaction, not of biological needs but of economic and ultimately technocratic needs, there is no such thing as freedom unless we're talking about the intent to destroy the whole fucking system. Even elite designers are just tools of the technology, the way the factory worker is an adjunct to the machine (in contrast, possibly, to the artisan, who develops and deploys her *[sic]* own tools).

Barring some big surprise, if things keep advancing in this direction, solutions like a universal wage become necessary. A growing part of the Silicon Valley elite already supports the universal wage. It's progressives who are making the proposal, but we need to be clear that it reflects the needs of social control, and nothing else, the same way that welfare was an attempt to institutionalize the poverty and racist exclusion that fueled the struggles of earlier generations *[ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg48**]*. Marx was dead wrong. Socialism was not the result of the evolution of society's productive capacities. Our productive capacities were never so scarce as to rule out universal abundance. Socialism, if it comes, will be a strategic imposition by the State, taking advantage of the evolution of its capacities for social control, as a needed measure to bail capitalism out once again.

In the meantime, workers can expect to find their bread and butter in the sectors with a future. For the privileged workers, this means design, programming, and applied scientific research. For those of us without degrees, or for the suckers who went for humanities, this means the parts of the service sector that are in expansion: restaurants, tourism, and in general the production of experiences, which, sickeningly, turns out to be driven by people's need to post content on their social media [...]

Restaurants and bars are already a major employer for suckers like us, but it will go a lot further. Extreme sports, self-improvement, personal trainers. Sex work on steroids<sup>[1]</sup>. Lines will blur, and the affective economy will come to define a much larger part of the service sector. The isolation and misery that the traditional family engineered and that internet and entertainment technologies took down to the ninth layer of hell will be solved by new employment categories that don't yet explicitly exist. We can talk about a suicide economy: the new sex/affective/entertainment/experience worker will help us find the will to live again. Self-care will become a growth sector.

1. *It's always disappointing when needed and intelligent critiques gain traction right at the moment when capitalism needs them (I won't say they arise at this moment, as though Capital calls the ideas it needs into being, since they tend to exist long before, though they remain obscure). Unfortunately this seems to be the case with sex work. It's great that the victimistic views of priests, social workers, and essentialist feminists have been challenged, but the possibility of a radical practice within sex work may well depend on the ability of sex workers to stake an innovative position in the struggle against capitalism, because it is in the interest of the new economy for sex work to be re-legitimized and diversified.*

# 'A SMART NEW WORLD OF SLAVES'



## Click- & Crowd-Working in Platform Capitalism

"Crowdsourcing" is a mixture between "crowd" and "outsourcing". Jobs are no longer deferred to employees of a company, but dumped on an army of digitally working nomads. The crowdworking-platform 'Mechanical Turk' by Amazon is one of many that offers minimal assignments. 500,000 people in 190 countries stand-by for assignments like the editing of websites, texts, product descriptions, or the transcription of audio.

The starting signal to use the swarm of "clickworkers" was given by Amazon in 2006. when the corporation started to sell CDs. Hundreds of thousands of CD covers had to be checked for sexual content before they could be uploaded onto the digital platform. A task a computer wasn't good at accomplishing because of its nebulous criteria. In imitation of decentralized distributed computers in the cloud, Amazon thus invented *the crowd* – a kind of "massively parallel" human computer: **twisting the human-machine relation, the computer now asks people to help it with its work**. Everybody could sign in on a digital platform to check CD covers for a couple of dollars per hour. Succeeding this specific task Amazon elaborated its job platform. Amazon charges 10% of the total fee paid by any "employer" for the accomplishment of a task mediated by Amazon. What is paid is left to the employer. The status the micro-workers assume in a job like this is that of a modern-day labourer. The question of working contracts or social security is obsolete. The unilaterally defined terms of the service platform rule in favour of the employers's despotism. Isabella Mader put it these words: "*wage theft is a feature, not a bug*". Payment is often considerably delayed – sometimes deferred. Amazon clearly states on its website what the balance of power looks like: "*If the work performance does not meet your standards, reject it and don't pay the worker.*"

In Germany also, crowdworking platforms are growing, like the Berlin company CrowdGuru or Clickworker GmbH from Essen and there is no saturation in sight. As soon as a task can be precisely framed and modularized it can be outsourced to "non-employees". For most tasks a minimum fee is determined – most of the time announced as a competition. The only one paid is the winner of this competition – all the others will go empty handed. Platforms that pay per hour offer an app for download. The crowd worker has to use it to log in when they are working on a billed task. But not only the working time is scored. In irregular intervals (six times per hour) screenshots are made and keyhits and mouse movements per minute are registered. "*We don't control, we facilitate the framework for protection and trust*", says one platform manager. "Trust" is generated by accessible evaluations, similar to those of online delivery services. Employers evaluate the work of their digital nomad visibly to all potential future employers. **To keep up the appearance of fairness, micro-jobbers may also pass judgement on their employers (that will not have any effect though).**

Even if a small bohemian world thinks they can design their lives in a more flexible and autonomous fashion as freelancers "*in the name of enhanced autonomy*" ([Michael] Burawoy) and push the fusion of work and free time under conditions of maximized independence of location to the limit: the popping-up digital sweatshops will ultimately serve to weigh down wages – in every branch of business. The german trade union Verdi rightly states a "cannibalisation of the employment market": Freelancers will do the same work on worse conditions. The DGB (German Trade Union Association) sees that as a "modern type of slavery" where everybody tries to underbid everyone else to gain acceptance of a bid. In case of sickness and age things get even more ugly for crowdworkers. There is (currently) no social security or reliable work regulation which heed this kind of labour without rights. To be able to reject any claims made on them Uber and Deliveroo avoid calling their drivers "employees" speaking of them as self-employed instead. *Welcome to a smart new world of slaves.*

## Permanent Evaluation Through Digital Recording

All digitally recruited on-demand-service-providers share a common fate. Their work performance is constantly rated and assessed. Digitally received benchmarks

that are highly differentiated allow algorithmic measuring of the individual engagement of anybody working on demand. Thus immense pressure is created to adapt behaviour to tap into enormous reservoirs of self-optimization and self-ratification by means of competition.

The accessibility, speed of arrival and friendliness of Uber drivers is evaluated in each fare. Those who reject fares on their drivers app will score less. Those who get stuck in traffic jams and are replaced with a click by impatient customers not only lose their fare, but run a risk of losing their so-far-high scores. The number of points gained, determines which drivers are preferably assigned, and thereby what these mostly precarious drivers will earn. The price of fares from Uber is about 25% less compared to common taxis anyway. Additionally another 20% from this dumping price will go off and be transferred to Uber for acting as agent. What looks like a computer game from the outside, haggling after high scores, is inevitably internalized as one's livelihood.



Companies like Foxconn and Amazon even manage to generate a next to all-encompassing registration of all off-line working steps through consequential application of high-tech surveillance. The rating of employees in some of the Amazon plants is even more insidious (see the passage *Efficiency-Training Humans to Become Machines*). Because of the high rates of sickness of up to 20% the gigantic online retailer introduced a presence bonus. Not only for every single employee, but for team-rating. Especially robust teams that called in sick less than others received a bonus of 70-150 Euro a month per person. **This not only poisoned the atmosphere at the workplace, it also negated sickness as a normal part of life; especially as a result of a monotonous one-sided work induced stress[...]**

## Efficiency-Training Humans to Become Machines

Amazon employees work under enormous stress. Contradictory to their contract of employment, most of them work overtime and on Saturdays. Strictly hierarchical so-

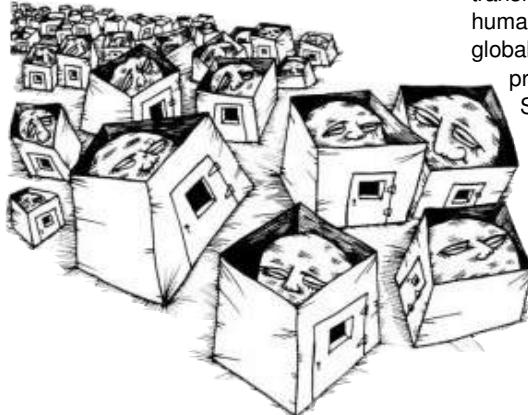
called leaders pass down pressure to the pickers and packers of their team by listing their mistakes. Pickers "pick" the ordered articles from the shelves walking up to 20km a day – trackers record their walking performance to the split second by allocating exactly wherever they are, while a hand scanner records all the work sequences involved determining the next step. **If a picker is delayed the system triggers the alarm: leaders automatically receive a message on their screen. A so-called feedback ensues.** "For the sole reason of optimizing the process", of course. Packers also have a minimum to perform: to pack 200 individual parcels or 100 multi-parcels an hour. But the constant rating of the employees is not without consequences: a green card means praise, a yellow card is the equivalent of a written warning. Three yellow cards mean dismissal.

**The requirement: everybody is supposed to be above the average. What is mathematically impossible is the dynamic principle of continuous reinforcement of work pressure by competition within the staff. The consequence: an overall coercion to self-optimize<sup>[1]</sup>.**

Even if employees want to rationalize their tasks to avoid unnecessary walks penalty points are dealt out. Any deviation from the algorithmic allowance will be sanctioned – for the sake of standards. Any trace of individuality means a loss of control – loss of replaceability. Amazon wants every employee to be replaceable by a colleague anytime – without losses at handover. An informant from the administration reports: "My working instructions dictate the exact position of my keyboard and mouse on my desk. And also where my waste-paper basket sits under my desk. It is absurd and oppressive".

## Dequalification by Digital Production Lines

What production lines have only managed rudimentarily, the



algorithmization of the working process manages to take to a whole new level of perfection: the complete quantification, standardization and thereby compulsory acquisition and devaluation of work – formerly only in production, now also in administration and development. In more and more office jobs the individual work load is also rated and controlled by a ticket system. What is already standardized by exactly defined specifications of performance in service and typical call center jobs now expands to the more freely organisable office job settings. In future the office person will work like at the production line. Companies will try to concentrate the unavoidable creative work on a few well-paid employees.

*The result: a few jobs in the development department where people tell computers what to do. And more and more devalued jobs where the computer tells people what to do.*

The separation of creative assignments that will remain the prerogative of people in the long run is a necessary requirement for (future) "robotization" of thereby other tasks devalued [ed. – see *New Technologies, Extraterrestrial Exploitation & the Future of Capitalism*]. Amazon's pickers etc. will no longer exist in its most modern German plant Winsen, near Hamburg in Lower Saxony. At the end of 2017 robots will bring the required shelf segments to the packer, who will pick the required product to pack it.

## Industry 4.0: Running the World as a Company

Industry 4.0 is the term to describe the whole of production. A new regime of production that aims to control all global production and cash flow, as well as the workforce behind it with the help of a digital infrastructure. There is the talk of a fourth industrial revolution after mechanizing in the 18th century, electrification in the 19th century and automation of the 20th century.

The propagandists of Industry 4.0 are designing a scenario in which humans, machines and intelligent systems are transformed into an integrated digital-human workforce and become parts of a global, highly efficient, self-controlling production process applicable at will. Supposedly needed therefore is an "architecture and a system of regulations consisting of millions of inter-linked instances adding value worldwide [...] that is safe, robust and highly accessible."

The emphatically launched virtually necessary hype already has left huge traces. Compass, a German start-up in Silicon Valley

analyses procedures of companies to automate the working process. Artificially intelligent controlling systems are supposed to ensure a seamless integration of robots into the working process. Competition with robots devalues human workforce at a ripping pace. Foxconn wants to automate some of its plants in China completely, and replace all human employees by robots. In Kunshan, China, Foxconn has dismissed 60,000 of the once 110,000 employees in 2016 for the fabrication of iPhone7, and replaced them with robots. According to South China Morning Post 600 companies in Kunshan are supposed to add robots to their production line which will result in a wave of mass layoffs.

**[...] If less and less people work and the necessity of labour as a normative force of order only applies within strong limits then disciplining by labour will no longer be sufficient to maintain (self-) governance.** The solution for the ruling class is already perceivable. The future order will not only be based on the evaluation of work, but by judging and adding value to any individual activity and life-expression. Self-employment will be extended to every area in life. People have long since stopped being members of their workforce only. Their assets as a whole are so much entangled with themselves that they themselves become added value. We sell *ourselves*, not only our manpower [sic]. The social value determined by the rating and scoring of networks like Facebook [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net*] advances to the real economic (self-)worth.

[...] We have to attack the evaluation process and the participative enforcement of ourselves through permanent (self-) measuring as a basis of being (heteronomously) steered.

[ed. – Edited slightly from the original translation.]

1. ed. – "In the technology industry, corporeal manipulation is a rite of passage. Fledgling startup founders tote bottles of open-source future-smoothies to exempt themselves from the time-wasting ritual of the lunch break. They convince themselves that intermittent fasting and geometric nootropic pellets will stimulate their mental faculties. As self-proclaimed "biohackers," they purport to treat their bodies as computers – machines that require inputs in order to generate outputs. [...] Yet, while the [Silicon] Valley acolytes voluntarily reboot their bodies in pursuit of seven- or eight-figure salaries, workers placed lower in the socio-corporate pecking order face far more invasive, paternalistic forms of bodily control – with no such promise of flush autonomy. [...] Companies like Walmart and Humanyze are encroaching on their employees' bodies with RFID-chip implants [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?*], badges that record audio and movement, and "self-improvement" health campaigns" (*Our Bosses, Ourselves*).

# THE EXARCHEIA COMMUNE RISES & DEFENDS ITSELF

## – a review of the battle

[ed. – The second in a series of dispatches from Greece by a travelling comrade reflecting on the anarchist space in that country. This regards the 2016 annual anniversary of the killing of Alexis Grigoropoulos (see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg17), always a conflictual date in the Athenian neighbourhood. We publish this as fighters gear up for the 2017 date as we speak... not (at least unnecessarily) to add to legend of this often-romanticised anarchist stronghold, but for its tactical and methodical inspirations.]

"*Ons Danse le Lachrymo...*"  
– graffiti, France, July 2016  
(transl. "We Dance the Teargas")

"Comrade, will you watch these while I throw one?" He is tall, masked from head to toe in black, and is known to me. As he speaks he motions to a milk crate stuffed with Molotovs. "Sure... go ahead," I say as I light a cigarette and settle in to guard the precious weapons stash while he tosses the thing at the Social Enemy. Ten minutes later he returns and in spite of the dark night, his black clothing, and the shadow we stand in, he glows with happiness – like the Molotov he just launched, he is alight.

### Strategy

The strategy was simple, and for the anarchists new, defend the beating anarchist heart of Athens, of Greece, perhaps the world. Block, stop and turn back any and all attempts by the Athens Police to get to Exarcheia Square. And do so in a coordinated fashion between all the various groups, teams and squats. Each entity taking responsibility for one or two streets – ensuring they are effectively blocked. This in contrast to previous years when the rioting was scattered, unfocussed and usually developed into clashes around the Polytechnic, the University complex set off several blocks from the Square. This year, the Polytechnic and its environs played no role whatsoever, but Exarcheia Square sure as hell did. Finally, in crystalline form, the strategy was to take and keep liberated territory, to free a community – if only for a few hours.

The strategic plan included blocking all the approaches to the Square and by establishing a secondary system of barricades to

neutralize the unfortunately offset side streets that link the main avenues. The side streets were one of the real dangers of the plan, because should the Police actually have the ability to turn a barricade they would then have flanking access to at least one, perhaps several, adjacent streets and barricades. **The barricade that my team was tasked with defending was located such that the side street would have given the cops the advantage of flanking us effectively from the side and rear. Not good.** In order to counter this threat a series of smaller side barricades were set up on these side streets, effectively slowing any belligerent force from going on a free ride from one street to the next, one point of defense to the next. Two small pedestrian streets also lead into the Square and these were barricaded as well. **Finally there was a hope that at one or two points the anarchists could push hard enough to move the fighting up the street effectively expanding their territory** and maybe even be able to sever a police line of reinforcement, or even better, retreat.

The one huge downside to the system of barricades was simple – if one or several were turned it would have given to the police the ability to flank every remaining barricade from the rear. A rock and a hard place scenario. Everyone seemed aware of this, and as fighting was heard in other streets I saw more than one rioter glance nervously over their shoulder in anticipation of a police charge from the rear. Fortunately this never happened.



### Tactics

The primary tactical component on the anarchist side was the barricade – construction, defense, and use as a weapon. The Exarcheia barricade varied from street to street. Usually low, sometimes waist high, on occasion higher, but never above eye-level so that the fighters could see over and anticipate police charges. Most included tires, wood taken from construction sites, large planters from the sidewalks, **anything that could be ripped out of the ground, torn off a wall, or broken was used to raise the barricade just one inch taller.** In one case two steel police barricades had been used to block a side street. In many instances barricades caught fire, either deliberately set or by accident. Once alight, the fires were allowed burn unchecked. The actual battle tactic was to taunt, harass and generally disrespect the forces of authority in a vocal and physical fashion. This included standing in front of the barricade throwing stones at the cops in the hopes of pushing them off their adjacent corner. Occasional chants could be heard rising up from various barricades, the only one I recognized being a chant calling cops murderers. The cops would charge and be driven off by Molotov and stone barrages. In one case the barricade I was at was turned by the cops, but only for a moment. A swift counter charge by anarchists pushed them off the barricade and back down the street. It's fun to watch a cop retreat, especially as the ground around them sputters and roars in flame and smoke.

In terms of cop tactics they are hard to guess. But it seemed a pattern of varied harassment and probing. They seemed to move personnel from one barricade to another over the course of the night. The barricade I was at was very active with three or four charges an hour, usually beginning with a barrage of flash bang

grenades followed by teargas, loads of teargas; then a charge, and a retreat. I saw this tactic deployed over and over, on almost every street. **Some streets, hotly contested early in the evening, were virtually empty an hour or two later. Other streets, like mine, felt the brunt of the fighting.**

There was one barricade situated on a downhill street, in other words allowing some tactical advantage to the

cops on a charge, which while contested, it was not a main point of fighting. I kept thinking that the reason must be that the retreat was hampered by the sloped street. **Finally, the weather helped the insurgents – it was a humid, rainy cool night.** The two pedestrian walkways, swathed in tiles that get slick as shit when wet, went effectively uncontested. The cops realizing that short of wearing shoes with soles slathered in krazy glue there was no way to safely run and retreat on a surface that was, in effect, as treacherous as ice. Almost all insurgent forces like inclement weather to fight in especially against regular troops, one Special Forces guys told me that rain and 45-55 degrees Fahrenheit is sufficiently gloomy for regular soldiers to begin to lose heart. In his words, *“It tears the morale out of you.”* Athens on the evening of December 6, 2016 was misty/slight drizzle, with a temperature hovering at 50 degrees. *Perfect.*

## Weapons

The Exarchia Molotov is a brilliant technical innovation of the weapon, and worth taking note of. In general they use 500ml beer bottles, filled half way or a bit less with a flammable liquid, usually gas. They then take a length of gauze bandage and extend a portion into the gas and tape the remainder at the opening of the bottle for a fuse. The traditional dangling fuse being a relic of the past. **This accomplishes two things**, first as the bottle is only filled half way, the gauze wicks gas and inundates the remaining air in the bottle with gas fumes. Turning the Exarchia Molotov from a simple device that delivers fire into – a bomb. The damn things actually explode in massive purplish red flame as the remaining liquid gas erupts and spreads fire to anything it touches. Next the taping of the wick at the opening of the bottle, again inundated with liquid gas makes a perfect “fuse”. It can be easily lit and thrown without the danger of self-immolation by a flopping, flaming piece of cloth. **I would very much like to meet and congratulate the folks who developed this thing.** It's brilliant, it's easy, and the Athens Police hate them like the plague – with good reason. The Exarchia Molotov is a fearsome and effective weapon. Some comrades have further advanced this innovation with an attached canister, which explodes on impact. I have no idea what's in this canister and asked one of the guys who was throwing these infernal devices what made them work, but as he spoke no English, and as I speak no Greek it remains a mystery. The explosion is loud, like a flash bang, with the attendant dispersal of flaming gasoline to the surrounding area. More information later, perhaps.

**Hand thrown chunks of whatever. The most desperate thing I saw in Exarchia that night was insurgents scrambling to get their hands on stuff to throw. One scene that I'll always remember was of a bunch of young people kicking a pylon cemented in the sidewalk to loosen it. They eventually succeeded and it had the added benefit of producing further hunks of concrete when it was finally hauled out. Tiles torn out of walls, empty bottles, anything not actually nailed down was loosened, ripped out and thrown at the police.**

In addition I saw slingshots, and an actual, honest-to-God, David-slays-Goliath sling being used. The projectiles used included ball-bearings, marbles, stone or concrete chunks. These were clearly weapons of harassment, used during lulls to further infuriate and demoralize the police.

Finally, though linked to a cop weapon, the anarchists have found the use of gas masks absolutely essential. There was little breeze on the night of December 6th and even small amounts of teargas were devastating as it settled into corners, doorways and hung in the damp, unmoving air.

On the cop side little was new, the usual suspects. Flash bang grenades, though in Athens these don't use launchers, they are hand thrown. What is devastating in their repertoire is teargas, Brazilian teargas.

**Having been gassed recently in France, I'm beginning to be something of a lacrymator connoisseur, and I can tell you that Greek gas is dense, acrid and acidic – far more so than the Gallic variant.** In terms of first aid there is Riopan. A kind of Maalox *[ed. – a brand of antacid that counter-acts tear-gas]*, but in handy single serving foil packets. The ground around the various barricades was littered with these white foil packs. And the faces of many insurgents looked clown-like as they poured the white liquid liberally into eyes, onto the mucous membranes, and finally taking a swallow to clear the acidic, noxious gas residue out of the throat.

## Order of Battle

**Anarchists: 800-1,000.** Organized as teams of between 5 and 10 fighters. Those from Exarchia were assigned to various barricades and maintained themselves within their area. Those from outside Exarchia roamed, the sound of flash bang grenades drawing them to specific streets, militants would frantically move from barricade to barricade as cop charges changed location and intensity. In a lull most hung out in Exarchia, drank beer, talked, and scrounged for more stuff to throw. The number dwindled over the night to perhaps two hundred when the militants

finally dumped arms and hostilities ceased, about 11:00 pm.

**Cops: 200-300 (a guess).** Based on my observations of the number per charge (20 cops maximum) and the number of barricades being simultaneously probed and harassed – upwards of five, and the number of police needed to provide logistics, support, command, reserves, and to steer traffic well out of the area.

## Snapshots

As I sit and write this on the Isle of Lesvos a short 24 hours after the battle a number of scenes come to mind. Sitting in a room discussing preparations for the night, many of the militants standing, pacing, nervous with energy to get started. As I guarded the Molotovs having some Italian comrades wander by. They asked for a Molotov, which I provided and we all agreed that the Greeks had done something very right. Helping a young woman overcome by gas, who, when the Riopan got into her eyes and nose immediately recovered. Like a stoned person suddenly sober – she straightened, said, *“Thank you Comrade,”* turned and headed back to the barricade she was attending to. The sight of burning barricades, great arcs of Molotovs fuses sputtering as they flew and struck home in the ranks of the police. **The shouting, chanting, laughing, talking – the feeling of really finally being alive.** One's hair standing on end as the flash bangs explode and teargas projectiles clatter on the ground and cloud the street.

Finally on my way back to the apartment I was staying at, I noticed a small store open, with several people playing cards at a table in the back. I knocked on the door – needed smokes and something to drink. They motioned me in, and asked where I was from, a few questions and finally one of the older men asked, *“So tonight did you see the riots?”* “Yes,” I answered not wanting to give too much away. *“And who are you with, the young people or the cops?”* Hesitantly I said, *“The young people, always.”* He smiled broadly and answered, *“So are we.”*



## 'COMBATIVE SOLIDARITY'

[ed. – Currently distributed in Exarcheia, anticipating December 2017 clashes...]

Social power against state repression is founded on combative solidarity.  
By participating in the resistance we build our capacity for collective self-direction.

### ...you too can:

- open the door to your house or building to those who are persecuted by the cops
- provide protesters with access to the roof
- throw an (empty) flower pot from the balcony
- put out a bucket of water for the neutralization of teargas
- offer water, Maalox solution (1/2 water) or Riopan pills to those injured by teargas
- offer first aid and protection to the injured
- come out on the street and stand against the state murderers
- communicate with other neighbours and protesters, gather together and coordinate
- contribute to the building of barricades and provide “ammunition” with any objects you no longer need
- take video documentation of the actions of the occupying police forces and publicize their violence through means of counter-information (without filming the faces of protesters)
- stand up against incidents of arrests
- observe the daily movement of police forces and share this information with fellow fighters
- encourage those who fight
- do all that you can imagine so as to contribute to the struggle
- organize in structures of resistance and partake in their collective strategy building

**TO THE BARRICADES,  
for FREEDOM and SELF-  
ORGANIZATION**  
**WITH OUR CONTINUOUS  
STRUGGLE WE HONOUR  
THOSE MURDERED  
BY THE STATE**

# SYMBIOGENETIC DESIRE

## – an egoist conception of ecology

### An Unfortunate Silence

Egoist anarchism has regularly had criticism leveled against it for its relative silence on issues of ecology. This criticism is well-placed: other than a few references to how non-human animals are exemplars of egoism due to their seemingly unalienated relationship with their desires<sup>[1]</sup>, egoist literature is sorely lacking in this regard. This lamentable absence likely has to do with the proclivities of its authorship more than anything else, as an egoist analysis is readily applicable to ecology.

The *identity eliminativism* – the denial of oneself as having an essential self, a perspective that will be defined and developed further in this piece – implied by egoism is the basis of this ecological worldview, as one's sense of self expands to subsume and be subsumed by one's habitat and symbiotes. Through such an analysis, one steers clear of the twin alienations of, on the one hand, the tiny self, that is, the self as an independent, enclosed, free-willed subject who remains relatively stable through space and time and who interacts with a world of objects; and, on the other hand, the reification of the nonhuman world, that is, the construal of nonhuman organisms as a more or less unified whole that acts collectively for the Good and into which one can dissolve oneself or to which one can swear allegiance [ed. – see **Return Fire** vol.1 pg24].

Eschewing both of these alienations, one finds oneself able to experience a symbiogenetic desire that unites a love of oneself with a love of one's ecosystem.

### The Expansive Self: Identity Eliminativism

An egoist conception of ecology begins with the notion of the expansive self. The expansive self regards the inner world, our thoughts and emotions, and the outer world, our phenomenality or sensory experience, as inseparable, as each reciprocally informs and defines the other. Insofar as identity can be said to exist, it is our perceptual totality, shifting from moment to moment. When we walk through the world, all that we touch and perceive is an extension of ourselves; conversely, there is no I that exists separately from our phenomenal experience. Thus, *the self subsumes and is subsumed by the world*, annihilating this subject/object dichotomy that alienates us from other beings and places.

If our language sounds strange here, it is because we are trying to talk about the ineffable. Perception is the basis of



existence, but it is also profoundly difficult to describe with words: the qualitative always eludes the symbolic; however circumspect and technical or poetic and pithy the phrase, it can never completely capture the real of our experience. The phenomenologist [Maurice] Merleau-Ponty, while not an anarchist egoist (actually, for at least part of his life, a Marxist! \*gasp\*), nonetheless beautifully described how perception is neither subjective nor objective but a gestalt from which the two are artificially rendered: *“The visible about us seems to rest in itself. It is as though our vision were formed in the heart of the visible, or as though there were between it and us an intimacy as close as between the sea and the strand [...] What there is then are not things first identical with themselves, which would then offer themselves to the seer, nor is there a seer who is first empty and who, afterward, would open himself to them – but something to which we could not be closer than by palpating it with our look, things we could not dream of seeing ‘all naked’ because the gaze itself envelops them, clothes them with its own flesh.”*

What is traditionally called the object of perception, then, is as much a part of ourselves as what is traditionally called the subject of perception – we are so accustomed to think only of the latter as being truly ourselves. With the dissolution of transitivity of identity, the importance of perception to identity becomes clearer still. David Hume is instructive on the point of identity eliminativism, when he observes that there is no essential substrate, no fixed and quintessential I, that exists *behind* his phenomenality or the thoughts and feelings he has about it; instead, his sensory experience and his reflections of that experience are the whole of his being. **We are not merely a body, which is only part of our perception, but instead everything we perceive, everything with which we interact.** And among that with which we interact are of course other beings, meaning that our consciousnesses are inextricably intertwined.

We are therefore experiencing at all times the ultimately ineffable phenomenon of nigh-infinitely many mutually co-created consciousnesses. When we encounter one another, human or nonhuman, being or place, each becomes forever a part of the other – whatever beauty, strangeness, or upset that encounter might bring, we know, as those feelings pass from immediate intensity yet leave us permanently changed, that we have only encountered a new and stimulating aspect of ourselves with which we were previously unfamiliar.

### The Tiny Selves: The Reification of Identity

To highlight my meaning with a foil, opposite to the expansive self are various conceptions of what Jason McQuinn has taken to calling “the tiny self” – the self as mere body, the self as the free-willed bourgeois economic agent, the self as social role or identity, and so forth. Each of these is a reified self, an idea of who and what we are that comes from giving undue weight to one aspect of ourselves, to hypostatizing one part of our experience and imagining that it is all that we are.

The expansive self is diametrically opposed to these conceptions of self that characterize the dominant culture: the Cartesian self [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg54] that sees its distinctiveness as self-evident or the bourgeois self that imagines a separable entity that is self-willed and therefore morally entitled to and responsible for its economic success.

To take just one case here, as I have discussed this issue at greater length elsewhere<sup>[2]</sup>, Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum* (“I think; therefore, I am”) contains, like every ideology of domination, a subtle presupposition: “I”. Stirner rejects out of hand the Cartesian split by describing himself as “creator and creature [*Schöpfer und Geschöpf*] in one” – **he does not presuppose himself as a separate entity of his phenomenal perception but instead recognizes that subjectivity and objectivity are simply synthetic conceptual frameworks, sometimes useful instrumental constructions that have no existence beyond our moment-to-moment imagination of them.**

Nietzsche [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg52] similarly repudiated this atomized self as a linguistic fiction, a mode of thinking imposed on us by the subject-verb-object structure of our language.

### Nature: The Platonic Residue

Yet the expansive self is also the very antithesis of any conception of Mother Nature, Gaia perspective<sup>[3]</sup>, or other reification of the nonhuman – it is not advancing the notion that there is some transcendental whole we could call Life

that we might dissolve ourselves into or act on the behalf of for the Greater Good. While there is certainly a great deal to draw from the observation that organisms often are deeply enmeshed symbiotically, that the niches in ecosystems are often mutually reinforcing; these phenomena are counterposed by the fact that, at times, organisms also demonstrably act inimically to the stability of the biosphere: take cyanobacteria, photosynthetic microorganisms whose evolution might have annihilated most life on Earth 2.3 billion years ago by filling the atmosphere with oxygen that was toxic to the anaerobic majority of life. **Considering**

**contradictions like this one, what can it mean to act in accordance with the biosphere?**

Even were this not the case, the identification of a Gaia or Life would be yet another case of self-alienation – we do not experience a biotic/abiotic totality except in cases of adventurous imagining; and, to whatever extent there is one, we are surely as much a part of it as anything else, meaning our desires are its desires. It thus cannot grant to us any metric of value. Unfortunately, a pernicious desire to recapitulate this reification of the nonhuman, for “*life [to be] about something bigger than ourselves*”,<sup>[4]</sup> persists in anti-civilization theory today [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg92].

The Platonic [ed. – see ‘*The Matter of Knowing Who We Are*’] urge is strong: insofar as we put our weight in recent archaeological findings<sup>[5]</sup>, the very beginnings of Civilization may be characterized by believing in things “bigger than ourselves”, things greater than actual and particular beings or events, things vast and eternal. Whether it can be said to be an essential human characteristic is unclear, but it is certainly an urge of present human beings to reify aspects of their lives, perhaps due to a relationship with enslavement<sup>[6]</sup> or depression<sup>[7]</sup>. Though some seem to think an ecological perspective entails reifying something great and beautiful and leaping into it with outstretched arms; an alternative lies in persistently refusing reification, rather than simply choosing which is ostensibly the right one.

### Symbiogenetic Desire

Biologists, most famously Lynn Margulis<sup>[8]</sup>, employ the beautiful term *symbiogenesis* (etymologically meaning something like *origin of life together*) to describe the phenomenon in which two or more ostensibly distinct organisms become so closely intertwined in their lifeways that they more or less merge into one creature.

By way of example, certain termites are able to digest wood through having their guts inhabited by protist (complex single-

celled organisms) symbiotes who, in turn, are inhabited by bacterial symbiotes; up to one-third of a termite’s weight can consist of these creatures, each of which is dependent on the others for survival. Other species of termites have their massive nests inhabited by a fungus that acts as a kind of external stomach for the insects, enabling enhanced digestion. The fungus occupies a larger volume of the nest and possesses a greater metabolism than the termites themselves, and it possibly influences the behavior of the insects through chemical signaling not unlike the kind that happens among differing organs of the same body.

In the same vein, an immensely distant ancestor of our cells may have been formed similarly, through smaller and simpler cells fusing into larger and more complex ones. Margulis’ Symbiogenetic Hypothesis posits that at least some eukaryotic cells – the complex cells that, in this case, make up plants and animals – came about through larger cells engulfing smaller cells, the latter becoming organelles of the former.

**A parallel, then, can be drawn between this biological understanding of inseparability and emergence in the organic and the gestalt sense of identity – or, perhaps better, lack of identity – described above. Recognition that each of us is constituted by every other being we encounter entails a perspective of intimacy, a desire to live as deeply and vivaciously as possible. As an ecological perspective, then, reveals itself as one that treats all organisms, humans and nonhuman, as potential symbiotes, cocreators with whom we can have various relationships.**

Just as one might have a close and intimate, a friendly, a cordial, a neutral, an antagonistic, or a hostile relationship with a human, one might have any of those relationships with a non-human. One might therefore strive toward unions of egoists among the organisms in one’s habitat, maximizing mutualistic interactions and minimizing antagonistic ones through Stirner’s understanding of infinitely revisable collaborations among beings who combine their powers toward the pursuit of cooperatively achieved, but individually recognized, values. Even non-animals, surely, experience something [ed. – see *Veganism: Why Not?*], possess a phenomenality, and have some notion of value, one we can often infer through interspecies communication; though surely their experience of value is unspeakable and ultimately incomprehensible to us.

Through such unions, we become symbiotes of one another; our sense of self expands to encompass the bodies, lives, and values of others through symbiogenetic desire.

Practically, an interspecies union of egoists would surely entail the abandonment of agriculture, a thoroughly stultifying practice that homogenizes experience and squelches the diversity of mutually co-created consciousnesses. Subsistence through some combination, varying with bioregion, of foraging and horticulture/permaculture would mean not only a richer and more diverse habitat; but also would entail an intimate relationship with it through regular interaction. In this way, we truly inhabit our ecosystem, enriching ourselves as well as our symbiotes from whom we are inseparable. Similarly, the abolition and destruction of the homogenizing and toxifying institutions and infrastructure characterizing civilization follow from such a perspective, as they could only limit and stultify ourselves and our connections [ed. – see *What Could Compensate for the Loss of the Night Sky?*].

### Anti-Civilization Egoism

The gaze of the rapacious capitalist objectifies the biosphere, treating it as an object to be plundered by whoever has the tenacity and guile to best exploit it. The paleoconservative or libertarian gaze romanticizes it, regarding it as the wide-open terrain of *rugged individualism*<sup>[9]</sup> on which one might live off the fat of the land. The liberal or conservationist gaze spectacularizes it, transforms it into a thing that should be cherished and preserved for its beauty. **Again, all of these perspectives are iterations of alienation predicated on reifying the subject/object dichotomy; they merely dress it in different skins.** As M. Kat Anderson writes, “These seemingly contradictory attitudes – to idealize nature or commodify it – are really two sides of the same coin, what the restoration ecologist William Jordan terms the ‘coin of alienation’ [...] Both positions treat nature as an abstraction – separate from humans and not understood, not real.”

But the egoist perspective dissolves this alienation [ed. – at least in theory...]. It refuses the notion that our selves are limited to this little bag of skin; it insists that we extend our bodies to encompass our perceptual horizons. I am every person I have met, however fleetingly; every river I have swum in lovingly or passed by, barely noticing; every mountain I have climbed or merely glanced upon while driving; every intoxicant I have consumed; every advertisement to which I have been subjected. The habitat in which we choose to live thus becomes not merely a

logistical-economical choice, but instead one of whom we fundamentally want to be.

**The anti-civilization insurgency thus takes on an irredeemably personal character.** We do not resist civilization because it is “innately wrong”<sup>[10]</sup> or because it is “the domination of nature”<sup>[11]</sup>, we resist it because it is an absolute assault on ourselves. There is no need to mediate such a desire through an unfounded claim about transcendental goods and evils or a conceptualization of the nonhuman; it is one immediately felt.

The flattening of living ground into dead, uniform parking plots is the flattening of our affect. The mediation of our lives through representations is a stifling of creativity and dreams. The denuding and toxification of the biosphere is the restriction of our lives and the narrowing of possibilities. Our sorrow and rage is not directed at some essential metaphysical Other that attacks Nature; it is directed at a immediate mutilation of our experience, of ourselves.

1. [Max] Stirner writes, for instance, when imagining a conversation with people who feel they need absolute values to guide them lest they merely follow their instincts and passions and thus “do the most senseless thing possible. [Thus each deems himself the] devil; for, if, so far as he is unconcerned about religion, he only deemed himself a beast, he would easily find that the beast, which does follow only its impulse (as it were, its advice), does not advise and impel itself to do the ‘most senseless’ things, but takes very correct steps.” Stirner, Max. *The Ego and His Own*, trans. Steven T. Byington, ed. Benjamin R. Tucker.

2. See my “*In Defense of the Creative Nothing*”

3. Note that by Gaia Perspective, I do not mean to refer to the Gaia Hypothesis advanced by James Lovelock.

4. Hayes, Cliff. “*Slaves to Our Own Creations*”, *Black And Green Review*, vol. 1.

5. Consider the recent claims by archaeologist Klaus Schmidt – leader of the excavation of Göbekli Tepe, the earliest known human monument – that a human turn toward religion was the beginning of Civilization as its construction precipitated, perhaps necessitated, the domestication of plants and animals in order to furnish the sedentary lifestyle dictated by the construction, maintenance, and worship of the monuments. The monuments themselves display symbols that might be interpreted as the human domination of the nonhuman (humans holding, perhaps controlling, various animals that might be considered dangerous) and the triumph of patriarchy (phallocentrism).

6. Rosset, Clément. “*The Cruelty Principle*”. *Joyful Cruelty*.

7. Real, Terrence. *I Don’t Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression*.

8. A number of biologists dating back to the early 1900s have discussed variants of this theory. Margulis put forth the modern version, still controversial but widely accepted, arguing that animal and plant cells first formed through the unification of simpler cells. She has since argued, more controversially, that symbiogenesis ought to be considered a major factor of evolution, influential on a par with selection by competition.

9. ed. – “[T]he endless parade of meaningless interactions and activities in which we are forced to participate: working, paying rent, buying and selling, paying bills, dealing with the presence of cops, bureaucrats, bosses, landlords, etc., etc. [makes us] dependent on the totality of the social order and at the same time transforms us into atoms that mainly seem to bump into each other randomly due to circumstances beyond our control in the meaningless, ceaseless movement of commerce. In the United States, an ideology has grown around this that absurdly goes by the name of “rugged individualism”. The absurdity is dual. First of all this ideology defines “individuality” precisely in terms of this atomized existence in which each one is nothing more than a cipher, equal to and separate from every one else in their nothingness. Secondly, these atomized beings that are the “individuals” of this ideology are made absolutely dependent by a social order that defines their lives as a competition for the same petty ends, thus guaranteeing their ongoing identity and separation. There is certainly nothing rugged in such abject dependence. The aspect of social fragmentation that this ideology seeks to justify – atomization – may play a major part in our inability to create real projects of affinity together that spring from our own lives, particularly if its ideological justification has penetrated into our own ways of conceiving individuality. [...] The concept of individuality that this society imposes stands as a crystalline and pure object outside of all relationships, but real concrete individuality is, in fact, a relationship. I become who and what I am in relation to Esther, Dave, Tiger, Susannah, Mary, Ivy, Anais, Membrane, Brendan, Brandon, Avram, Mandy, the woman at the coffee shop, the preacher in the church my parents made me attend, my parents themselves, the cops, the state, the economy, the technological apparatus, [ed. – and, we must add, non-civilised lifeforms] etc., etc. None of these relationships determines who I am, but all play a role in how I create who I am. A relationship is not a crystalline statue. It is an activity, a movement in course” (*Life as Totality*).

10. Tucker, Kevin, *Black And Green Forum*.

11. Zerzan, John, “*Patriarchy, Civilization, And The Origins Of Gender*”.



## 'THE POND'

Individual man [*sic*] has his particular integrity, to be sure. Oak trees, even mountains, have selves or integrities too (a poor word for my meaning, but it will have to do). **To our knowledge, those other forms are not troubled by seeing themselves in more than one way, as man is.** In one aspect the self is an arrangement of organs, feelings, and thoughts – a “me” – surrounded by a hard body boundary: skin, clothes, and insular habits. This idea needs no defense. It is conferred on us by the whole history of our civilization. Its virtue is verified by our affluence. The alternative is a self as a center of organization, constantly drawing on and influencing the surroundings, whose skin and behavior are both soft zones contacting the world instead of excluding it. **Both views are real and their reciprocity significant.** We need both of them to have a healthy social and human maturity.

The second view – that of relatedness of the self – has been given short shrift. Attitudes toward ourselves do not change easily. The conventional image of a man, like that of the heraldic lion, is iconographic; its outlines are stylized to fit the fixed curves of our vision. We are hidden from ourselves by habits of perception. Because we learn to talk at the same time we learn to think, our language, for example, encourages us to see ourselves – or a plant or animal – as an isolated sack, a thing, a contained self. Ecological thinking, on the other hand, requires a kind of vision across boundaries. **The epidermis of the skin is ecologically like a pond surface or a forest soil, not a shell so much as a delicate interpenetration.** It reveals the self ennobled and extended rather than threatened as part of the landscape and the ecosystem, because the beauty and complexity of nature are continuous with ourselves.

And so ecology as applied to man faces the task of renewing a balanced view where now there is a man-centeredness, even a pathology of isolation and fear. It implies that we must find room in “our” world for all plants and animals, *even for their otherness and their opposition*. It further implies exploration and openness across an inner boundary – and ego boundary – and appreciative understanding of the animal in ourselves, which our heritage of Platonism [*ed. – see Symbiogenetic Desire*], Christian morbidity [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg40*], duality, and mechanism have long held repellent and degrading. The older countercurrents – relics of pagan myth [*ed. – see 'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'*], the universal application of Christian compassion, philosophical naturalism, nature romanticism, and pantheism [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg43*] – have been swept away, leaving only odd bits of wreckage. Now we find ourselves in a deteriorating environments, which breeds aggressiveness and hostility towards ourselves and the world.

How simple our relationship to nature would be if we only had to choose between protecting our natural home and destroying it. Most of our efforts to provide for the natural in our philosophy have failed – run aground on their own determination to work out a peace at arm's length. Our harsh reaction against the peaceable kingdom of sentimental romanticism was evoked partly by the tone of its dulcet façade but also by the disillusion to which it led. Natural dependence and contingency suggest togetherness and emotional surrender to mass behavior and other lowest common denominators. The environmentalists matching culture and geography provoke outrage for their oversimple theories of cause and effect, against the sciences which sponsor them and even against a

natural world in which the theories may or may not be true. Our historical disappointment in the nature of nature has created a cold climate for ecologists<sup>[1]</sup>, who assert once again that we are limited and obligated. Somehow they must manage in spite of the chill to reach the centers of humanism [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg40*] and technology, to convey there a sense of our place in a universal vascular system without depriving us of our self-esteem and confidence.

Their message is not, after all, all bad news. Our natural affiliations define and illuminate freedom instead of denying it.

They demonstrate it better than any dialectic. Being more enduring than we individuals, ecological patterns – spatial distributions, symbioses, the streams of energy and matter and communication – create among individuals the tensions and polarities so different from dichotomy and separateness. The responses, or what theologians call “the sensibilities,” of creatures (including ourselves) to such arrangements grow in part from a healthy union of the two kinds of self already mentioned, one emphasizing integrity, the other relatedness. But it goes beyond that to something better known to twelfth-century Europeans or Paleolithic hunters than to ourselves. **If nature is not a prison and earth a shoddy way-station, we must find the faith and force to affirm its metabolism as our own – or rather, our own as part of it.** To do so means nothing less than a shift in our whole frame of reference and

our attitude towards life itself, a wider perception of the landscape as a creative, harmonious being, where *relationships of things* are as real as the things. Without losing our sense of a great human destiny and without intellectual surrender, we must affirm that the world is a being, a part of our own body.

Such a being may be called an ecosystem or simply a forest or landscape. Its members are engaged in a kind of choreography of materials and energy and information, the creation of order and organization. (Analogy to corporate organization here is misleading, for the distinction between social (one species) and ecological (many species) is fundamental.) The pond is an example. Its ecology includes all events: the conversion of sunlight into food and the food chains within and around it, man drinking, bathing, fishing, plowing the slopes of the watershed, drawing a picture of it, and formulating theories about the world based on what he [*sic*] sees in the pond. He and all the other organisms at and in the pond act upon one another, engage the earth and atmosphere, and are linked to other ponds by a network of connections like the threads of protoplasm connecting cells in living tissues. [...] To convert all “wastes” – all deserts, estuaries, tundras, ice fields, marshes, steppes, and moors – into cultivated fields and cities would impoverish rather than enrich life aesthetically, as well as ecologically. [...] Even deserts and tundras increase the planetary opulence. Curiously, only man and possibly a few birds can appreciate this opulence, being the world's travelers. Reduction of this variegation would, by extension then, be an amputation of man.

1. *ed. – As far as institutional ecology goes, we follow Canadian comrades of Knowing the Land is Resistance in “[describing] the mainstream science of ecology as “dominator ecology” to refocus attention on the power relationships created by the practice of science as it is commonly carried out [ed. – see A Green Anarchist Critique of Science]. [...] We need to critique and fight dominator science to create space for us to trust our own experiences again [...] These starting points are: rooted in relationships, deep listening, urban ecology, re-enchanting, and unexpertness.”*

# CLARIFICATION ON THE ATTACK ON THE CGT HEADQUARTERS & ON THE TOPIC OF 'ANONYMOUS DISASSOCIATION'

[ed. – This text deals with events that unfolded during the Spring of 2016, when the introduction of the French Minister of Labour's amendments to the labour laws served as the kick-off for uprisings across that territory, detonating the tensions one street-poster described had been building against "exploitation, state of emergency [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg5**], all police power, paranoia, virtual life and future promises that look too much like this dreary present". Quickly escaping the control of the unions who had summoned the mobilisations, soon black blocs and rowdy young people (and more) less ostensibly impacted by the specific law changes were heading the demos, fighting cops, trailing destruction and aghast Leftists. **This moment was characterised by some as 'ni loi ni travail'; neither for (or only about) law nor work.**

The union bureaucracy typically (i.e. in a mirror image of the fist-fights in Perpignan with anarchists on May Day 2006) tried to control the movement and physically police its participants. (This isn't reserved for moments of mass rebellion; just months before, as Air France workers chased down bosses effecting redundancies and tore the shirts off their backs, knocking out their two security guards, the union deputy secretary general physically stepped in to protect the targets of their rank-and-file's rage.) **True to form, the union 'demonstration stewards' at demos began handing over 'trouble-makers' to the cops.** Sam FantoSamotrafi pointed out that "[f]ar more than probably anywhere else in the world (other than dictatorships, or semi-dictatorships) the unions in France are very much an intrinsic part of the state and work as a central part of the management of capital. The union question is probably the most central question facing any would-be social movement in France that doesn't want to end up repeating old mistakes and being inevitably defeated. [...] It's vital to know that probably less than 8% of workers are in unions – about 4% less than in 1968. Of course, this is partly due to the huge increase in unemployment, part-time jobs and auto-entrepreneur status since that period. However, like in '68, that doesn't mean they don't have a significant detrimental influence on struggles. [...] **The unions strongly oppose any communication between the more obviously integrated, and usually older, workers and younger proletarians, unemployed or in precarious work, and those destined to become so.** Hence their blatant hostility towards the most radical elements during the struggle – those who smashed things up, particularly the high school students."

Soon the unions themselves found themselves in the firing line for their attacks, as was the case when the Paris headquarters of the CFDT was stormed by a hundred rioters ("it unfortunately was not a surprise", an official lamented: "[in recent weeks] our locals in Bethune, Limoges, and Toulouse were either flooded or damaged") after unions again collaborated fully with police on a day that saw more than a hundred arrests in Paris and a manhunt for radicals. **Of the other organisations involved, one of the more notorious is the CGT (Confédération Générale de Travail),** whose 'Force Ouvrière' patrol demos armed with telescopic batons, pick-axe handles, baseball bats and helmets, attacking demonstrators and sabotaging the uprising (just as they did as the 'Service d'Ordre' during the events of May 1968 – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg96**).

"Classes cancelled, wild demonstrations, graffiti, breakage, tear gas, a government under stress and a faculty on strike. Something is on its way to be born. "We" are on our way to be born. To name what is on its way by a name of that which has preceded it is to try to kill it. It would be a process of neutralization to attempt to bring together all that we have seen in the streets since last Wednesday, that which has been bubbling for weeks, the rage that growls all over in the "shadow of the CPE"<sup>[1]</sup> and all the howls. What could be the relation between the words of the unions and the school kids who tagged "the world or nothing" just before methodically attacking the banks? None. Or just perhaps a miserable attempt at recuperation performed by zombies. Never have the unions or the politicians been so visibly trailing behind a movement. If they are so feverish in their desire to frame everything to their liking it is because everything could very well escape their control. [W]e have taken to the streets and we have been numerous. The organizations have followed us. The risk of not coming on board was too great for them. If they were to stay behind, their mandate would be null and void. Those which they pretend to represent would have taken to the streets without them, without being able to put their banners at the front, without being able to cover our voices with their terrible soundsystems, their boorish slogans or their dead & buried discourse. They would have been bared naked." – *The World or Nothing*

1. The CPE was another labor reform bill that sparked intense protests in Spring 2006.

"The secretary-general of the CGT Philippe Martinez had already justified the prohibition of participation in demonstrations sent the day before the demo of 14th June to 130 people (including some CGT members): "It's normal – they are casseurs [hooligans]" he said, judging them on the basis of the police files and not even on any judicial proceedings. [...] In Marseilles, on 12 May, the CGT stewards assaulted with sticks and teargas loads of different demonstrators in order to disperse them. And during the demonstration on 17th May in Paris they charged the protesters who were slow to disperse. Similar abuses have been reported in several other cities" (Sam FantoSamotrafi).

**The day after the CFDT received their trashing, it was the turn of the CGT:** masked individuals broke several doors and windows of the Paris HQ, and "managed to escape the cops thanks to the complicity of the crowd in the street who cheered us and covered our retreat". **What resulted from that attack, a denunciation from an altogether different angle, is the subject of this article.** As was also to be read on the walls of Paris during the months-long insurgency: "We have discovered, or rediscovered, what it means to run across the pavement, to play in spaces where policing controls our every movement. We knew that this society of misery depended on our servitude, and our fear of cops, but we've learned that we are strong enough to overturn it, that they can't prevent us from playing like wild children who destroy everything they pass." The new president imposes an updated version of the law, dubbed "Loi Travail XXL" by opponents; just last month at a protest in Rennes against the new work ordinances, hooded youth swarmed estate agents and damaged a bank (immediately being denounced by the unions organising the event), while a jobcentre in Foix was tagged and had oil poured all over the floor and staircase.

As we have reported on before (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg18**), such unions are a clear enemy on our path, and we celebrate attacks against their structures. But, this aside, why is this event in Paris

still deemed relevant well into the next year, aside from the fact that this specific summary on the (presumably ongoing) situation of denunciation and clandestinity was still previously untranslated? **Because we deem that it composes an ongoing chapter in the debate specifically within the 'anarchist galaxy'; when tactical disagreements can themselves lead to denunciation in the most unfavourable circumstances: in this case over the question of whether making public a claim of responsibility for a destructive act really adds something to its achievement, or rather enters the stage of political spectacle (even if to counter the cops' or media's claims or framing).**

To be clear, we think this to be a worthy topic worth further exploration (and regret that some consider the debate already 'aborted') – but clearly not in the time, tone or format that's outlined as having happened in this case. Also, we have included following the piece an example of a much more fruitful dialogue between anarchists a year later, again in France, and reflecting on themes within the 'Dangerous June' call-out by comrades for an intensification of solidarity with prisoners (and other accused) in Italy. This is how the call-out for that mobilisation in part read: "In particular, active solidarity is an essential instrument to respond to state violence and not take its blows passively but maintain a stance of attack, so as not to develop attitudes of victimisation [ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; The Origins of Victimisation**], which is what repression wants. Thinking in terms of offensive, of permanent and internationalist conflictuality beyond each one's path, the risk of isolation can be reduced and one of the enemy's most important goals can be made ineffective. To express solidarity with specific contexts and projects doesn't mean to have to conform to the discourses and practices of those who have been struck, nor does it mean to necessarily follow in the wake of a given struggle or practice: if we recognize ourselves in a common horizon we can act in solidarity according to our own individual tension.]



On the night of 24-25th June 2016, comrades from a 'cell among many others' attacked the national headquarters of the CGT union. The action was subsequently claimed to denounce the collaboration of the unions with the police prefecture and in solidarity with the rebel prisoners in France as well as members of the Conspiracy Cells of Fire [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg40*] – the latter individuals now nearing the end of their trial for their alleged escape attempt [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; 'Yet Another Fenced World'*]. The communiqué also mentioned that the comrades [who attacked the CGT] were seriously wounded, being hunted by cops, and living in clandestinity.

On the 25th June 2016 a media furore was underway, and Martinez, representative of the CGT, several ministers, including the Minister of Labour El Khomri, Interior Minister B. Cazeneuve and the Prime Minister M Valls, along with all the representatives of various unions, one by one made public statements of condemnation against the action (which of course comes as no surprise...), stating that police forces would be reinforced to defend the HQ of trade union federations and to find the "visibly well-organised" people responsible for the attack.

Such a political and repressive mobilisation is not explained so much by the level of violence used, as by the target chosen, as the attack was of relatively low intensity (despite being judged to be of unrivaled magnitude by the media).

The comrades effectively showed that it was possible to attack and even enter the headquarters of the most video-surveilled union federation in France, one which was most well-protected by private security as well as by a heightened police presence in these times of social conflict and the state of emergency.

Despite Martinez's claims, the comrades had the opportunity to enter the building in order to further their destructive passions, as illustrated by the photos of the smashed-in door. It's therefore neither the lack of time, nor the security guards, nor the so-called security system that would have been triggered that stopped them.

The same day (25.06.16), **in the midst of the media hype**, the anarchist site "Brèves Du Désordre" disassociates itself publicly from the comrades under the pretext that an action such as this should not be claimed and that they didn't agree with the comrades' perspectives on solidarity.

Here's the brief response made by one of the comrades responsible for the attack following the disassociation (Comment on Indymedia Nantes on 27.06.16):

#### *"Disassociation?"*

*Disassociation not of the act itself, but of the claim – and so by extension, of the individuals who wrote it:  
[cettesemaine.info/breves/spip.php?article1746&lang=fr](http://cettesemaine.info/breves/spip.php?article1746&lang=fr)*

*The reason given: it's pointless to claim so plain and clear an action, those that don't get it are simply "blind and anaesthetised".*

*This is then the reason for which our anonymous disassociates consider worth getting into an anti-union tirade – completely relevant as it happens – and which could be well mistaken for a claim itself.*

*Besides, the points made would have certainly been appreciated if the authors hadn't deemed it necessary to paint the comrades who authored the communiqué with false intentions by suggesting that the use of the word 'treason'<sup>[1]</sup> implied a past complicity with unions targeted.*

*Omitting (voluntarily?) the conditions under which the comrades produced the*



The graffiti reads; "we are all 'hooligans'!"

*communiqué: badly wounded and hunted by cops, without, perhaps, having the time and the opportunity to enter into analysis on the role of unions, absent from the communiqué – whatever our disassociated friends say.*

*From that moment on it's been very easy, whilst sitting in the warmth behind one's computer, to criticise the communiqués of comrades who, surely for understandable health and safety reasons had to write quickly before parting so as not to leave Martinez's account and the statement of the police prefecture as the sole versions of events.*

*Being in this situation means neither having the time to adhere to stylistic conventions on solidarity, having used the verb "faillir" ('have to'<sup>[2]</sup>) instead of the acceptable imperative form – as if that changed anything in terms of 'authoritarian language.'*

*Finally, it would have been possible to add this analysis on the role of unions parallel to the communiqué, as there is no contradiction, without saying to the enemy – even involuntarily – "it wasn't us, look elsewhere"...*

*Perhaps this was also in the pipeline, in a text proposed anonymously and written in a more general way to integrate the act and the responsibility claim to produce a clear analysis. And maybe it would have been agreeable with that proposed in the "Brèves du Désordre" – without ownership, without exclusivity and anonymous.*

*One actor in a 'cell among many others', created for the occasion, that carries no name, but has the practices<sup>[3]</sup>."*

We emphasise that it's not acceptable to disassociate oneself from comrades on the run, injured and under the fire of the media, with the sole aim of promoting one's own strategy of propagating one's subversive ideas.

Besides, we are persuaded the debate on anonymity which the partisans against claims of responsibility make out to be over, on the contrary lives on across actions and their communiqués, across messages of solidarity and responses to international calls and proposals that emanates from it, and lives on in all the anonymous acts, sometimes carried out by the same comrades, from whom certain purists disassociate themselves once more.

*Complicity with the cell of the ACCA<sup>[4]</sup>, and the CCF, both of*

which equally experienced the wrath of 'anonymous disassociation' in the most difficult times.

A special wink to the anarcho-nihilist commando 'Gianfranco Bertoli' [ed. – see **Memory as a Weapon; The Origins of Victimation**] of the FAI/FRI [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg44**] and the anarchist cell "Les Casseurs", who take material action with fire in complicity – among others – with the 'rebels in France'.<sup>[5]</sup>

A nod equally to all those, anonymous or not, who act in reality through destruction, fire, the propagation of ideas in all ways imaginable without ever disassociating from comrades under the fire of repression.

Through informal organisation and polymorphous action, let's spread chaos!

some anarchists,  
today anonymous....

1. ed. – The communiqué read "One hundred detainees because of the union betrayal".

2. ed. – The communiqué read "[solidarity with] the comrades of the CCF who want to escape. WE MUST HELP THEM."

3. Practices of attack and clandestinity, not of some sort of exclusivity or imagined ownership. [ed. – footnote in original post]

4. ed. – As part of Black December 2015 (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg64**) this group bombed a police training centre (also used by cops from other states) in Brescia, Italy; comrades Juan and Manu are under investigation over the act.



Bordeaux, France: CFDT office heavily fire-damaged a week after the events in Paris

5. ed. – Two attacks took place the same month as the CGT smashing; the first torching a van of French insurance company AXA in the centre of Athens (clarifying that it was not in solidarity "with the unions that try to manipulate the revolt to satisfy their own interest"), the second fire set against vehicles at Peugeot-Citroën dealership in Thessaloniki: "For almost four months the unrest continues in Paris and other cities of the French territory over a proposed new labour law, despite the intensifying control and repression in response to the recent ISIS attacks [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg5**] and in view of the Euro tournament. The struggle is manifested by all means, from occupations of squares, theatres, factories, to attacks against banks, stores, and large-scale clashes with cops."

### **Grenoble: incendiary attack targeting 12 vehicles of energy company ERDF / Enedis**

The most deadly enterprises are strategically adorned with new names. Suez becomes Engie, Vinci becomes Indigo, ERDF becomes Enedis [ed. – all energy and techno-industrial utility firms]. These changes of appearance do not miraculously deceive. **In a world where communication falsifies everything, let us frankly expose those responsible for the organized disaster.** ERDF works on the constant electrification of our territories. ERDF is deployed between each production site and consumer home. It is this network, this mesh of cables that plug human beings into dams, wind turbines, photovoltaics and nuclear power plants. EDF, alter-ego of ERDF administers doses of energy control bureaucracy. We will not discuss the insignificant distinctions that others like to make between the industrial modes of electrical production. We condemn them all.

Let us explain the night we destroyed the ERDF vehicles: We had firefighters in our pockets, a few liters of flammable material and our determination, sabotage then became necessary for us knowing the evidence against one of the thousands of avatars of the capitalist infrastructure.

*Due to the vital function of this company in flow management.*

*Due to the environmental devastation caused where EHT [extra-high-tension] power lines run [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg90**].*

*Due to our acute addiction to the electrical industry.*

Added to this is the small but very harmful device, the Linky [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg36**]. The dangers of this meter have already been explained by others who are more knowledgeable than us. The Linky is just a prelude, a pioneering device in the new wave of domesticating technology that is coming. Domotics [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg63**] is progressing, the old cybernetic dream is embodied [ed. – see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net**]. Let us not stop here, let us go back to its roots, to the genesis of nuisances. Behind the Linky lies the omnipresent industry and the logical dispossession of the material means to produce our own energy.

It's about attacking, and the targets are many. We are attacking those who are responsible for the present state of the world. **We are opportunists. Why this target rather than another?** Vinci, Suez, Eiffage [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg60**] and the CEA<sup>[11]</sup> are all enemies. There are others too. Their arrogance is unbearable. We look for weaknesses, seeking where to strike to remind them that people resist and turn their criticism into action.

We wish to share this practice of sabotage. It is old but it is still current. It is putting a wrench in the cogs of the machine. We are aware that the ERDF and their misdeeds will not be stopped by our action. But we are aware that without offensive actions against it, ERDF is free to expand its grip.

It is not a question of dialogue or criticism of ERDF. With the sabotage of these vehicles we attack an enemy, we establish a balance of power, and we demonstrate that we can overcome our fears. Because it is no longer possible for us to contemplate misery by dressing our wounds or simply doing nothing. **But sabotage is not an end in itself. This practice is just one of many others in our lives.** We choose them in order to fully live our lives.



"Linky fuck off": tag in Limoges by where women of Des Élus Contre les Compteurs LINKy (People Against Linky Meters) burned 20 Enedis vehicles, 23.10.17

## **Crest: incendiary attack against the offices of energy company Enedis**

### **A Proposal for Dialogue, Solidarity & Attack**

As individuals, it is difficult to speak of solidarity because we do not want to express it as a group, but to individuals whose feelings we feel would be sufficiently close to establish a dialogue.

We feel in solidarity with people who, through their actions and their discourse, seem to convey a will to fight in the here and now against power in all its forms.

For us the most sincere way of supporting individuals in revolt is to revolt ourselves and to attack. That people who consider themselves potential accomplices to be transmitted by force can allow our ethics and passions to guide our actions and not the fear and resignation brought about by repression.

Through the attack we want to break the isolation and express our anger and sadness. In times where distances are no longer counted, we reaffirm offensive and irrecoverable positions.

We believe that if we want to sharpen practices and critiques it can be interesting to share, to confront others. We are not interested in the idea of producing ideas labelled 'anarchist' that everyone can accept and adapt to their local discourse or context. We like the dissent and conflict that allow us to take a stand. We are as disgusted by the omnipresent apathy as we are deeply moved by the beauty of those who revolt without waiting for either objective conditions or the favourable social ground or the strategic moment. Our choices will never be convenient since they are always in motion. We have no one to convince, nor any desire to wait until we have a thousand plans, only the desire to meet other accomplices in the impatient and irrepressible urge to fight.

**The attack can take many forms and for us the interpersonal dominations must be at least as much attacked as this existent which chokes us.** We do not want to focus on one another. We reject this logic and want to make each aspect of our insubordination visible. In support therefore with those who take action in the face of repression, in their affections, their friendships, their sexualities.

*We do not live in the past, we do not want hope for the future; our revolts have no future, so they can not be postponed until tomorrow.*

Even if we advocate conflict, **we think that debates about praxis have all to often crystallized around polarized positions that do not reflect the complexity of the points of view.** We reject consensus at all costs but do not want to participate in a dogmatic struggle. We are really excited by the idea that attacks are varied and we are not satisfied with certain debates (recurring signatures or not, for example). Even if it seems really important to us to communicate our actions and we do not find ourselves in *[anonymous?]* insurrectional perspectives, we do not feel the desire to break with people whose attacks are part of this goal.

We respond to the call for a Dangerous June because it expresses these nuances well<sup>[2]</sup>.

During the night on Thursday *[June 8th]* we penetrated within the enclosure of the ENEDIS building in Crest, supplier of the energy that allows in particular this world of shit to turn. We spilled 10 liters of gasoline and lit it with hand-held lighters (we had a plan B in case the lighters failed). **10 liters of gasoline made a breath of fresh air. When the grille was put back in place, the building was in the grip of the flames. We learned later that they had largely devastated it.**

A little thought for the incendiaries of Grenoble; we found your method of attack and communicating particularly relevant. Your critique is very well articulated, we could not have done as well. But we want to take advantage of the opportunity to raise a few points, and thus participate in the creation of a dialogue through attack.

We share your observation about the nuisance of technology. Nevertheless it is only one aspect of the new forms of domination. For us, at the genesis of these nuisances there is civilization itself. **So we do not want to attack technology as one of the excesses of the system, which we could transform / replace, but as one of the aspects of the domestication of life.**

We do not want to be content with a criticism of capitalism but to challenge the very concept of society (as fair and egalitarian). We are against all societies because they can not exist without the submission of the living beings that they are composed of. Whether it is through smartphones, Linky counters but also via work, family, culture, morals, justice, the exploitation of fauna and flora...

To fight against technology, it seems necessary for us to question the process of domestication that makes us civilized beings *[ed. – see 'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are']*. We wanted this kind of critique to be a kind of interpersonal

discussion, and to share it with you. So we can always find new angles of attack, new weaknesses, new targets.

*The joy we felt that night, we want to share it with others.*

*To Krem, because he always knew how to keep silent.*

*To Kara, because even if she did not know how to keep silent, she had the courage to go back on those statements.*

*To Damien, because his words and his determination give us strength [ed. – regarding all three of these cited individuals, see Rebels Behind Bars; New Accusations After Damien Kidnapped & Beaten].*

*To the Brussels anarchists who face an anti-terrorist trial for having fought without mediation against all the prisons [ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg68].*

*To the accused of Scripta Manent [ed. – see Rebels Behind Bars; A Letter from Anarchist Comrade Anna Beniamino about Operation Scripta Manent & More...], who refuse to take on the role of victims.*

*To Nicola Gai and Alfredo Cospito [ed. – see previous link] who have been able to take firm positions despite the risks, and who have given themselves the means of their ambitions.*

*To those who want to fly away even if they burn their wings.*

**Konspiration d'Individualités Complices et Kaotiques (K.I.C.K.)**  
*[Conspiracy of Complicit Individuals and Chaotics]*

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1. ed. – *The Atomic Energy Committee, created in Grenoble in 1945 to build the atomic bomb, going on to nuclear submarines, reactors and aircraft carriers, regularly polluting the Isere river with radioactivity. In collaboration with the French military the CEA founded the nearby Minatec – see Return Fire vol.4 pg38.*

2. ed. – *From the call-out: "In this respect, we recognize the importance of multiform actions and practices within anarchism. Precisely because the more differences that exist in a context, the stronger the possibility of not getting stuck on pre-arranged dogmatic positions, provided that any specific struggle and attack is part of the wider view of tension towards subversion. To recognize the value of this diversity also means to lay the foundations for opposing all centralizing and dominating tendencies within anarchism. This is only possible through an attitude of constant self-criticism and critique between the different approaches, an attitude that goes towards qualitatively significant growth of both analysis of what surrounds us and the various possible ways to organize the destruction of what oppresses us."*

# NANOTECHNOLOGY & TRANSPARENCY

[ed. – Various mainstream press, with comments by the collator, mostly concerning 'nano-silver'. The industry, sensing negative image, has changed tactics from initially promoting nano-tech components in products on sale or in production a decade ago, and entered a phase of relative media silence on its uses. Meanwhile the same institutions that sung praises on the 'safety' of asbestos, industrial food, the Dalka shield, atomic energy, etc. continue to release their creations into the environment. Indeed the second translation presented here especially shows the cynical 'introduce the product and see what happens later' attitude that leaves us all as their consumers in techno-industrial society; whether we bought them or not. **To a certain extent the laboratories could misleadingly be seen as the source of the problem when for more than half a century it's already been daily life and the whole world that has become the field of experimentation.**

Of course, we offer a few words regarding the media sources reprinted here, which require the usual reading between the lines for subversives to make into their own tools (or not, as the case may be). These words have to do with the archetypal State-subjectified 'concerned citizen', infantilised despite delusions of 'inclusion', that these articles were no doubt first written to 'inform', and the sterile so-called 'dialogue' within civil society over these technologies (as before with genetic engineering, nuclear, etc.). Some 'Notes on Technological Domination & the Myth of the Citizen' put it like this: "Since they will never be able to make any decisions by themselves, for the citizen everything is transformed into a mere object of knowledge that is to be endlessly studied. **That is why they will only accept debates that are stripped of all practical implications.** The 'debate' in effect constitutes the privileged framework of civil society effusiveness: pleased that their dissatisfaction has been submitted for review, they listen religiously to the tranquilizing words of the experts who reveal to them the indispensable "objectivity" of their accredited Ph.D. knowledge; the more progress they make towards the illusory acquisition of this knowledge, the more they think that the time has come to commit to a comprehensive and fully justified decision. At the very moment when their certainty seems most fixed, however, they are once again seized by their sickly lack of resolve, and they collapse scorned and despondent in the ditch of their specific uncertainty. For they will never want to reach a conclusion.

[...] And when, during the debate at La Villette, it was announced that the development of GMOs [Genetically-Modified Organisms] is an indispensable last resort if Europe does not want to lose ground economically to the United States, they displayed their apathy with regard to what was clearly nothing but a decree. **Because they renounce all use of their will and discernment, the citizen, at the same time that their masters show that they are ready to face all challenges, is logically reduced to the need to tolerate everything.**" Engaged in false (or at best partial) 'debate' with science and industry you can find all kinds of NGOs, consumer groups, more-or-less 'green' political parties, and the other civil opposition that in most other aspects goes hand-in-hand with the



world of states, multinationals and their innovations. (And as far as the questions raised in these articles about 'regulation' go, it's enough to read from a 1978 guidebook for corporate executives: "Regulatory policy is increasingly made with the participation of experts, especially academics. A regulated firm or industry should be prepared whenever possible to co-opt these experts. This is most effectively done by identifying the leading experts in each relevant field and hiring them as consultants and advisors, or giving them research grants and the like. This activity requires a modicum of finesse; it must not be too blatant, for the experts themselves must not recognize that they have lost their objectivity and freedom of action.")

Increasingly today, this citizenist form finds itself not so much disturbed as complimented by another rising trend: catastrophism. Much has already been said about possible nano-induced disasters, available with a simple web search. While the well-known precipice Western allopathic medical science has brought us to regarding the near-obssolescence of antibiotics from their rampant use and corresponding resistance-building (to take one example) finds resonances with the immunity-building responses to anti-bacterial nanosilver mentioned below, in the same breath the scientist-prophets sell us the CO2 emission reduction promised by nanotechnology, hence heading off another catastrophic horizon... **Catastrophism can shore up the State via justifying 'climate security measures' in military (see Return Fire vol.3 pg7) as well as scientific terms** when it is divorced from any subversive horizon, and basing our critiques solely on 'health' or 'environmental' concerns fares little better in terms of leaving the door open to recuperation by the next expert and their 'solutions'.

**While we won't discredit the more dramatic threats sometimes painted (rather, acknowledging that the terrain it bases its arguments upon is not our own), these articles address the mundane, everyday appearance of nano-tech in our lives.** And it is exactly in this way that we come to the heart of the matter for us. Within an certain scientific paradigm (a dominant one, despite the protestations of some individual scientists powerless to affect the impact of scientific-universalist thinking on culture), the dream is still that articulated by Francis Bacon (see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?**) in his utopian work 'New Atlantis'; "the Knowledge of causes, and the secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible." (On how literally he pushed the imperial part of that, see **Return Fire vol.3 pg31.**) That same "effecting of all things possible", the impulse to realise all that is

technically feasible, creates the ideology that we call techno-totalitarianism, and is materialised in the world today as the converging sciences (nano-, bio-, informatic, robotic, they cannot be separated) aim to equip the system to produce anything anywhere, fabricating more durable products (of interchangeable parts rather than requiring exclusively important substances), made from less materials... In other words, to continue the industrial nightmare we already are and have been experiencing beyond and above the crises it has provoked, as others have said before eloquently enough (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg73**). Hence, we have reason enough to assault the ideologies and structures of these sciences – as exemplified in the chronology we have added to the text below – aside from any technical hair-splittings, before any 'disaster'. Finally, big thanks to Cicada for the additional translation help!]

## 1st Translation:

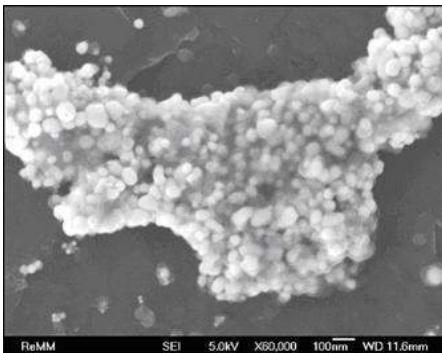
From WOZ N°22

"The industry is producing more and more consumer goods containing nanosilver. But most of these consumer goods are neither useful nor sensible. If anything, they are only a threat to the environment." – De Franziska Meister

A silence has fallen on the clamor surrounding nanotechnologies. New materials with new properties are diffuseable thanks to tiny, highly reactive nanoparticles. Where have these new materials ended up?

**The answer is surprising: nanomaterials have been present in our daily lives for a long time;** in fact, they have penetrated the most intimate spheres. For example, nanosilver. With it, we wash up, we brush our teeth, we anoint our armpits, our face, and all over the body in the most intimate areas; we dress with it, from socks to underwear to slippers. We use it to cook and package food. **Because nanosilver disinfects, it kills fungi, bacteria, and other microorganisms.** Meat is kept fresh longer under a film of nanosilver; it sterilizes the dishes; our socks do not stink; we do not stink.

The hygiene industry is big business. Globally, no other nanomaterial is used in as many consumer goods as nanosilver. In recent years, the rate of use has been very high and growing like never before seen. The estimated annual worldwide use of nanosilver surpasses thirty tons; in Switzerland, the annual production is of about three tons, a third of which is used in the textile industry alone. In Europe, this means that, after Germany, Switzerland is the second largest producer of nanosilver for textiles.



However, doing business based on our hygienic demands has its downside. An increasing number of studies have shown that, albeit at different speeds, nanosilver can become completely washed out. According to EMPA, the Federal Institute for Testing and Materials Research, it is sufficient for certain fabrics to be washed a few times in the washing machine to remove the nanosilver. Even nanosilver surfaces immediately lose their anti-rotting properties which are supposed to keep parasites away; in fact, according to a Swiss study, about 30% of nanosilver was in the sewer after one year, and after two and a half years the nanosilver was absent.

### What Happens in the Water?

Often, much of the nanosilver from consumer goods ends up in the water system: through the sewage pipes, it ends up in purification facilities, or is fed directly into lakes and rivers. And this is a problem, primarily because the active principle of nanosilver is based on the fact that in aqueous solutions the silver ions are isolated. The true toxic effect on bacteria comes from these ions and does not stop even against other aquatic organisms. "We have tested nanosilver particles of different sizes in different coatings," says one researcher at the ETH (Federal Polytechnic of Zurich), "**the result was always the same: silver ions of nanoparticles have an acute toxic effect on algae.**" And algae are always at the beginning of the aquatic food chain [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg24].

Under the national research program "Opportunities and Risks of Nanomaterials," her team examines the effect of nanosilver particles on aquatic communities, such as algae, moulds, and microorganisms, in the real world. "We observed a great susceptibility of algae to silver ions," says the researcher.

In the long run, communities of some moulds and some fungi would change into another variety. Investigations of such complexity are so far rare, as are studies of multiple generations of aquatic organisms – meanwhile, nanosilver's potential environmental dangers cannot be assessed without these studies, the researcher points out.

But to what extent does nanosilver truly penetrate the environment? There is no reliable data on this, among other things, because it is very difficult to detect the nanoparticles in the environment and measure their quantity. However, a colleague of the researcher was able to show in a recent study that certain purification facilities can retain about 95 per cent of nanosilver. Once in the discharge water, one part of the nanoparticles is transformed into saline silver sulphide. "Thanks to this [process], its toxicity drops a lot, because it emits almost no silver ion," the researcher

explained. "Our initial concerns were just that, while still having antibacterial properties, nanosilver particles would be harmful to the residue."

**In fact, several studies have shown that nanoparticles continue to be active even in the residue where they obstruct the work of the nitrifying bacteria in charge of eliminating toxic substances from the water. If, unlike in Switzerland, these residues are not burned but instead are spread onto the fields as fertilizer, the results may be even more toxic, according to a US-based study. "By doing these experiments, nanosilver is poured directly into the residue," says the researcher. "These experiments cannot be equated to the real conditions, because the silver nanoparticles have a history, which starts already in the sewage pipes."**

"[Nanotechnology] creates new 'products' actually starting from the manipulation of atoms, subatomic particles and molecules. Unlike biotechnology that manipulates the structure of DNA, creating organisms through the recombination of genes, nanotechnology 'breaks down' matter transforming it into atoms with the possibility of artificially synthesizing them and thus of creating something material from nothing (atom by atom). At the moment, attention is focused on carbon atoms, the skeleton of matter, but soon it could be extended to other elements. In short, scientists would like to control the elements of the Periodic Table at will; according to science, this would allow combining the characteristics of a product (such as color, resistance, melting point) in a manner completely different from what has been possible up to now. For example, the enterprises that deal with nanotechnology have tested new products such as stainproof fabrics, self-cleaning windows, cement with special characteristics, anti-pollutants for diesel, etc. [...] But the applications unfurled before the great public are just shoddy goods, useless innovations to satisfy infantile desires generated by technology in the 'consumer'. And, in fact, the applications described above for the manipulation of matter turn out to be just the tiniest part of the results sought in current research projects. [...] But as always, every fear, and not just those that are most absurd, is set aside in the name of progress to the benefit of humanity. Furthermore, the world of science has always been defended by maintaining that the misdeeds of techno-science are due to the bad uses that have been made of the knowledge; by maintaining, as always, that technology is neutral, just as those who, with their studies of nuclear science, then fully contributed to the bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the tragedies of nuclear accidents and to the proliferation of armaments, were quick to say. It is certainly not by allowing the usual experts from the same academic-political world the only say in the matter that we will be able to resolve such questions. Nor will we be able to do so by placing our trust in the information arising from the scientific world since one of its current prerogatives is to openly make people accept the new technological applications of scientific research. In reality, its transparent information merely communicates decisions to us that have already been made in our names and over our heads and discloses the results of research that has already been carried out. Who knows if in the case of nanobiotechnology, as already happened with biotechnology, those who claim to oppose it will once again venture into demands for regulation, precautionary rules, independent structures of control. Then the story will end just as it did for biotechnology: a minimal opposition to applications related to food with arguments easily recuperable (and recuperated) by a part of the scientific clique, with transgenic food that already makes part of our daily diet. No opposition at all to medical biotechnology that is rather looked upon by all as a great opportunity for sick people. And these things are really what the entire apparatus that has everything to gain from biotechnology focuses on: no more debate on GMOs in the dietary field, no more alarmism, no more news, despite the fact that there are still people who want to struggle, opposing the harm with the only possible solution: destruction." – *The Nano-Nightmare*

### Attention: multi-resistant bacteria!

Speaking of history: how harmless is it if each day we treat our body with nanosilver cosmetics and we wear it in our antimicrobial underwear? The federal office states in its Nanomaterials and Health Information Platform that nanosilver cannot be presumed as a danger to human beings.

Meanwhile, in Germany, the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment is more prudent. **It presents studies on animals that show damage to the intestinal flora caused by large doses of nanosilver, accumulated in the liver and spleen where it attacked the immune system cells.** Only because of some unique cases reported up until now can it be inferred that there is certain potential toxicity even for humans, especially with the intake of pharmaceutical drugs containing nanosilver. *"Unfortunately, we still know too little about the potential harmful effects on health that nanosilver could have,"* stated a researcher after an international conference of experts held in February, 2012. *"So, now, we are not able to evaluate the health risk for the consumer."* The German institute is concerned, above all, about the danger that wide-spread nanosilver applications through products of daily use poses: it could lead to the extensive formation of resistance to antibiotics. Thus, the extensive use of nanosilver could become a dangerous boomerang for the human being.

This is exactly what was shown in a recent study by Australia's University of New South Wales: in that experiment, nanosilver effectively killed the proposed bacteria, *Escherichia coli*, which is one of the most responsible bacteria for causing infectious diseases. However, **at the same time it caused aggressive growth of some vacuole bacteria, and these are not only resistant to silver ions, but can diffuse even faster in the air, while transmitting their resistant properties to other microorganisms.**

*"The antimicrobial effect of the nanosilver does not work with all bacteria,"* says one researcher, *"and if consumer goods containing nanoparticles are diffused increasingly over the long term, opposite effects could take place."* This is especially fearsome for the health sector, where resistant germs have been found in nanosilver applications, for example in skin flora after having used it for treating burns.

Also for this reason, the German Institute explicitly renounces the use of nanosilver in "widely consumed products." In particular, it views critically the continuous diffusion of fabrics containing this active antimicrobial substance.

### More Harm Than Good

*"Many products containing nanosilver are*

*in circulation,"* says one researcher, *"and they will become more and more numerous. Is it really justifiable?"* The researcher expressed doubts about the alleged antimicrobial effect on clothing. *"Nanosilver is very dynamic and unstable,"* he warns, and indicates the studies; they've demonstrated that in normal lab air nanosilver particles totally sulfurize after only two weeks, at which point they no longer emit silver ions. Even with air at 50-60% humidity they transform quickly. *"The antimicrobial effect could also swiftly deflate by simply wearing treated clothing,"* says the researcher.

This begs the question: who will change their own washing habits for antibacterial clothing alone? Who would wear their nanosilver-plated underwear for one week instead of a day? According to the researcher, *"You should leave the decision up to the consumer of whether or not they want these fabrics. And for this to work, you absolutely need labelling."*

The EU has decided: since the summer of 2017, cosmetics (and since 2014, food products) must include a note of some kind. The German Institute promises that with the revision of the EU Order on Biocides, even textiles produced with nanosilver must have a label.

And in Switzerland? The Federal Council wants to examine labeling.

*"Nanomaterials: Effects on the Environment and on Health,"* a new study being conducted right now by an evaluation center for effects of technology, recommends the introduction of mandatory labeling and statements "in the sectors of mass consumption." It also suggests a ban on circulating the "non-specific use of nanosilver in consumer goods."

*Numbered days for microbial underwear?*

### 2nd translation:

*according to the NZZ [Swiss Neue Zürcher Zeitung] from May 31, 2013; does not seem to be the same "Center..." mentioned above...*

### Unnecessary Nano Moratorium

Nanoparticles offer great opportunities for product improvement, but can they can put

"Switzerland is internationally seen as an oasis of uncontaminated nature, at least in the tourist sector. Mountains, woods and springs from which fresh clean water gushes out. Clearly, tourism is as sneaky a form of marketing as it is schizophrenic, because while it boasts of uncontaminated valleys it forgets other small details: Beznau, the nuclear power plant with its 47 years of radioactive waste production – and its disposal is at present unknown; the Basel pharmaceutical district with its aquifers and soil pollution following decades of chemical and pharmaceutical industry activities (some of them owned by politicians in the Swiss government); the fertilizers, herbicides and 'phytosanitary' chemical treatment constantly sprayed, without which modern conventional agriculture can't survive; the sites of the multinationals (from Nestlé to Novartis), which have more skeletons than money in their closets; the highways that give us huge quantities of CO, O3, NO2, SO2, C6H6, PM10, PM2.5 and much more disgusting stuff. In other words, this is no happy island. There's no river or breath of air that doesn't contain toxic chemical substances and the functioning of techno-industrial society requires that these substances be constantly transported throughout Europe. [...] Industrial progress has put us in the situation of living our lives in environments colonized by the needs of the market economy and techno-industrial society. Air is becoming ever less breathable and 'green areas' are disappearing in order to make space for advancing urbanization."



– Between Militarisation & Risk Propaganda

health and the environment at risk? In spite of everything, there is no need for action on the part of the legislator.

The emergence of a new technology usually raises the request for a moratorium. This is the case with nanotechnology, which works with tiny particles. Above all, the NGO, ETC Group, is fighting for an immediate moratorium on the commercial production of nanomaterials. Not sharing this view is the Center for Evaluation of the Effects of Technology (TA-Swiss), who conducted a large study on nanomaterials' effects on the environment and on health with funding from the Federal Environment Office.

*"A moratorium would be counterproductive at this point,"* said Professor Emeritus of Medicine, Peter Gehr. *"The level of knowledge of how human, animal, and*

plant cells react to nanomaterials has improved over the years. Although there have been some “critical knowledge gaps,” little is known about possible long-term effects on human health and the environment. For this reason, it would be necessary to continue the research on the risks, but alarmism would be out of place”, Gehr said. “A moratorium would not solve existing problems. An ethically responsible risk management would be decisive. Opportunities for nanomaterials should be exploited only when new risks are considered to be reasonably acceptable for the person exposed to it. Nanoproducts that could be viewed as toxic could be limited, but it would also be a risk to not take advantage of this new technology’s opportunity,” Gehr said.

Martin Moller, who leads the study, sees opportunities in the climate protection field, for example. He believes that the use of nanomaterials could reduce the material and energy requirements for producing common goods, and, therefore, contribute to the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Moreover, he believes a research center for the gravity of climate and nanotechnology should be initiated here.

**In Switzerland, large-scale industrial nanomaterials are not produced, but they are already diffused in other ways, for example: in paints and varnishes for protection against ultraviolet rays; as sunscreens; as an antimicrobial additive in textiles and foodstuffs; in tennis rackets and in bicycle frames; and, as an adjuvant for the fluidity of food.** However, it is almost never made visible to the consumer where these nanomaterials are contained. Ta-Swiss, whose job it is to advise policy, therefore recommends introducing mandatory information and labeling obligations for consumer products, such as cosmetics and food. Consideration should also be given to the introduction of a “nano product registry.” But a “Lex Nano” [Nano Law] would not be necessary. The compatibility of legislation and EU rules would have to be monitored.

### 3rd translation:

From the Swiss newspaper “Landbote”. [This “study,” or rather, this clutch of federal techno-totalitarian state propaganda, typical of scientific, political, industrial, and NGO gangs in Swiss style, can be found as an E-Book at [ydf.ethz.ch](http://ydf.ethz.ch). Always with the same ingredients: omissions; lies; incredible contortions of logic; the threat of “Well, it’s us who decide” on the “opportunities” for health and the environment; “anyway, nanomaterials are here and that’s that;” “let us

deceive ourselves with democratising labeling...” etc. And, watch out to not disturb these great humanitarian and democratic benefactors, even if it had only to do with that pseudodemocratic legislative theater of a moratorium. (Marco’s note.)]

### Nanoproducts: Soon, More Transparency?

Nanomaterials promise lighter-weight bikes, socks that do not stink, and even lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. But those tiny particles can be dangerous to health and the environment. A study by TA-Swiss reveals some knowledge gaps. “There is little transparency on what products contain nanomaterials,” Martin Moller, director of the Institute for Applied Ecology in Fribourg im Breisgau, said in front of the media yesterday. Although Switzerland does not produce nanoproducts on an industrial scale, it works with them in large quantities.

The research center for the evaluation of the effects of technology (TA-Swiss) summarises what is known about the effects of “nano particles” on the environment and health. From those it draws recommendations for politics, industry, and science.

According to the study, in Switzerland there are eight nanomaterials that are produced or worked with in large quantities. Among them are zinc and titanium oxide for UVA protection in colour paints and sunscreens; nanosilver with antibacterial effect for fabrics and food preparations; silicon oxide to facilitate the fluidity of tires; nanocarbon fibers for bicycle frames and tennis rackets. **Nano particles are composed of metal, or even carbon, with particles ranging from just one to 100 nanometers – about 1,000 times finer than a human hair.** Their size allows them particular characteristics which can be useful, though also harmful.<sup>[1]</sup>

### May Have Carcinogenic Effect

For humans, inhalation into the lungs would be especially problematic, according to Peter Gehr of the Institute of Anatomy at the University of Bern. At high concentrations, certain nanocarbon tubes and titanium oxide could be carcinogenic. “The long-term effects of nanoparticles are, in practice, unknown and should be examined,” Gehr said. But alarmism would also be out of place, although there may be a need for public awareness, as certain nanoparticles would indeed be potentially dangerous.

These nanoparticles also escape into the environment, like with titanium oxide in sunscreens or nanosilver in fabrics. At very high doses it has been proven to cause damage to aquatic organisms, explained eco-toxicologist Kristin Schirmer of the Eawag Aquatic Research Institute. But the long-term effects in this case are not examined and remain virtually unknown. In practice, according to the study, it would never be made visible to the consumer which products contain nanomaterials. The labeling requirements are not uniform, although the EU proposed a definition as early as 2011. “Consumers currently cannot exercise their freedom of choice because of a lack of information,” criticized the Romanda Huma Khamis consumer organization. Therefore, the study recommends greater market transparency for the consumer with a product registry and mandatory labeling. Additionally, it proposes a national research center on the effects of nanomaterials. The question of residue/waste disposal should also be resolved.

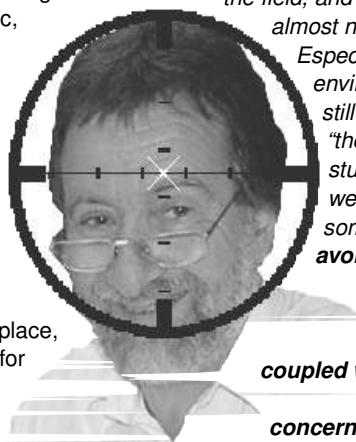
[Technoscientific totalitarianism candidly announces the inevitable catastrophe that is ongoing and hypocritically evokes a lack of “freedom” of choice due to a lack of “information” on the part of the consumer, in order to – with the typical, stupid arrogance of power, as the former deserves – implicitly declare that it is about the introduction of “technological innovations...” (Marco’s note.)]

### 4th translation:

An article from the NZZ, “Swiss Economic Forum, Technology.”

[From the same NZZ issue, an article titled “Research and Technique” informs us that nanoparticles are on “swimming spots and fields,” and “how researchers notice,” or, rather, fail to notice, “carbon nanotubes, nanosilver, and other tiny particles in the environment.” And they admit that, “concerning the amount of nanomaterials produced on an industrial scale in water, in the field, and in the air, as of yet almost nothing is known.”

Especially because “nano-environmental analysis is still in its infancy,” and “there are no methods of study,” but, “don’t worry... we will think of something.” **We cannot avoid mentioning the typical compound exercise of minimization coupled with announcements of inevitability concerning “our” samples of techn-**



Professor Gehr, false nano-critic

*totalitarianism. Case in point: the researcher, Thomas Bucheli of the Agroscope research institute of Zurich, responsible for open-field GMO experiments... Simultaneously, he comforts us by stating that the nanoparticles in the environment would still be almost non-existent, while also threatening us with the facts that "a growing number of patents" (most likely including some of his own) "indicate that carbon nanotubes, titanium nanoxide, and the like, in the future could also be used as active ingredients in fertilizers and in pesticides, for example as a carrier substance or as UV-protection." And then, the inevitably high dose of hypocrisy: "Given the scarce knowledge of these environmental effects, Bucheli warns against the large-scale use of long-term stable nanomaterials." (Marco's note.)]*

*"Small and medium-sized enterprises are pioneers in nanotechnology. The nanotechnology market is booming. Whether in sunscreens, computer chips, or repellent coatings, more and more Swiss companies are using nanotechnology for their products." – Alex Hammerli*

Innovations from the laboratories are having an increasing impact in our daily lives.

Since the invention of the tunneling microscope in the 1980s by IBM researchers and Nobel Laureates, Gerd Binnig and Heinrich Rohrer, at Ruschlikon near Lake Zurich, hundreds of products with nano properties have made their way into mass production – almost always in a stealthy manner in relation to the general public. **Meanwhile, Switzerland has a leading role in the nanotechnology market. According to Heinz Muller, an expert on patents for chemistry and biotechnology at the Federal Institute**

**for Intellectual Property in Bern, every year since 2006 there have been about 10-15 nano inventions per million inhabitants (with about 8 million inhabitants in Switzerland, that means 80-120 patents per year). Thus, Switzerland ranks first in the world – followed by Japan, Germany, and USA.** Now, more than 600 companies here [ed. – by now surely more] produce or work with nanomaterials in order to achieve greater diffusion in the treatment of materials and surfaces. One example is found with the company Schoeller de San Gallo. They produce a fabric called Nanosphere with the so-called lotus effect (water drips from clothing while taking away dirt) for companies like Levis and Black Diamond. Another company that focuses on nanotechnology is Solothurn's Spring Pharma. They quietly and successfully sell Daylong brand sunscreens, which contain nanoparticles of titanium oxide. Those tiny solar particles reflect the sunlight as if they were billions of tiny mirrors. Even larger particles have this same effect, but nanoparticles can produce more fluid and transparent creams.

A third story of nano success is SwissLitho. Using IBM's so-called Nano-Frazer technology, they've developed a device that can produce three-dimensional nanostructures. The heart of that technology is an extremely sharp and resistant silicon tip which can withstand up to 500 degrees of heat. With this technology, it is possible to not only produce smaller-sized chips for computers, but also to produce new electronic or optical chips [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire* vol.3; *Smarter Prison?*].

### Unbridled Growth

The latest figures from the US market analyst, BCC Research, show that the

success stories described above are not isolated cases, in fact they reflect a trend: the volume of the global nanotechnology market has grown only in the last year from \$600 million to a total of \$20.7 billion. By 2017, sales should already be at \$48.9 billion [ed. – and expected to grow another 17% between 2017 and 2024] – that is, an annual commercial growth of 18.7%.

Equally optimistic are the statements made in the "Swiss Nanotechnology Report": with the relationship initiated by the Federal Institute for Testing and Materials Research (EMPA), nanotechnology would be a "sector from the future with enormous economic potential." The need to exploit that full potential would be based on an effective transfer of knowledge and technologies from laboratories to enterprises with the least friction possible. That was precisely the objective pursued by IBM's research section and consulting firm: with a budget of 90 million Swiss francs, IBM Research partnered with the Higher Technical School of Zurich (ETH) and finished constructing the Binnimg and Rohrer Nanotechnology Center in 2011 in Ruschlikon [ed. – after an attempt by Earth Liberation Front-Switzerland to attack the construction failed: see *Rebels Behind Bars; Good News At Last From Italy!*]. This was based on an "Open Collaboration Model," meaning that expensive nano research laboratories would be open to cooperation with companies and other research institutes. The nanotechnology center offers 950 squared meters of floor space in sterile environments for basic research on new materials, and construction of elements at nano-scale. It is necessary for the laboratory's air to have a smaller amount of particles, since tiny particles can disable the nanostructures. In addition, the research center has special laboratories that, with shielding and measures to

"The role of the experts has always been to justify the technological system, to explain how the ongoing parade of disasters are mere separate incidents, aberrations that do not reflect at all on the system itself. We can no longer let them be the ones to make the decisions about these matters. And taking back the capacity to decide for ourselves on this matter can take only one road, that of attack against the system of domination and exploitation in all of its aspects. By the time the scientific experts are telling us about these technologies, they are describing a decision that has already been made over our heads. To seek any dialogue with them or with the ruling powers they serve at this point about them is useless. We need to recognize these developments for what they are – a further stealing away of our lives, an attack upon any capacity for self-determination that may be left to us. The opposition to these latest technological developments cannot go the path of so many past movements of opposition, that of attempting to dialogue with the masters of this world. In such dialogue, the masters always win. Perhaps in a few places, the monstrosities produced by these technologies have to be labeled, so that we have a "choice". But the monstrosities still become a normal part of our existence. Nanotechnology creates the tiniest monstrosities capable of the greatest horrors, because they are capable of carrying the systems of social control directly into our bodies. We cannot even pretend that there is any room for dialogue here any longer. This is a blatant display by the rulers of this world that the maintenance of social peace is an act of war against all the exploited and dispossessed. It is necessary for those of us who desire the freedom to create our lives on our terms, who desire to remain human individuals capable of any sort of autonomous action, to act destructively against the entire system of social control, the totality of this civilization in which machines ride people and people slowly transform into machines. Here and now." – *The Tiniest Monstrosities*

"Science is the eternal sacrifice of life, fleeting, ephemeral but real, on the altar of eternal abstractions. What I predict is therefore the revolt of life against the government of science." – *Mikhail Bakunin*

cushion external sources of interference, such as changes in temperature or vibrations, minimize inaccuracies.

IBM is committed to nanotechnology in order to *“further expand established information storage, processing, and transmission technology, as well as to develop new technologies,”* according to Matthias Kaiserwerth, director of the IBM Lab in Ruschlikon. He indicates that, according to Moore’s law, every 18 months so far transistors on the computer chips are doubled. *“If we want to maintain this rate of speed we will face several challenges, such as overheating, manufacturing, and gradation of the building elements.”* In short, miniaturization has reached its limit. *“Nanotechnology here offers enormous potential to overcome these challenges with new designs and materials,”* says Kaiserwerth.

## Huge Figures

Swiss research is at the top of the world's nanotechnology research, with the corresponding budget:

90 million Swiss francs = cost of the construction of the IBM nanotechnology research center and ETH Zurich.

100 million Swiss francs = donation by entrepreneur Adolphe Merkle in 2007 to the University of Fribourg. With that money, a research institute for nanotechnology science in Marly, on the outskirts of Fribourg, was built.

120 million francs = the budget of the federal Nano-Tera Initiative for nanotechnology-based sensor research [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg31].

140 million francs = the funding of the national research center “Nanosciences,” coordinated since 2004 by the University of Basel.

*[This is all due to the magical politics of the democratic circus, largely paid for by the ignorant “free and informed” consumer, on occasion good voter or indeed... taxpayer! (Marco's note.)]*

1. ed. – *[In a mid-2000's study], some rats were made to inhale carbon nanoparticles: their lungs look like those of the victims of asbestos. Carbon nanotubes bass were introduced into the water some bass they lived in: they developed various cellular abnormalities. Nanoparticles can already be found in sunscreens, in self-cleaning glass or in some rubber tyres [ed. – and by now much more]. Toxicologists have shown that their very small size allows them to move everywhere in the body, across the skin, blood cells or the blood-brain barrier. Why do insurance companies refuse to insure the environmental and health risks of the nanotechnologies?”* (Resistance to Nanotechnology in France).

**About the source:** This synthesis and commentary was originally released in Italian by Marco Camenisch (see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg70) from a jail cell in Lenzburg, Switzerland, as one of many translations or instructive/analytical and solidaritarian texts created during his three decades inside. In these most recent months, Marco finally began a staged release; involving day trips to the outside, weekend leave permits, a external job, and finally bail (as of March 2017, the comrade completed the process). In the build-up to his final exit, Marco communicated from Säkerhet prison that *“[t]he possibility of continue my political/personal relations (especially my writing) has been strongly reduced in recent years due to the repeated transfers and consequent reorganization of this work, sometimes starting again from scratch. And now, in this long passage 'between inside and outside' such possibilities have been reduced even more (often to a flicker...) or otherwise taken up, ex-novo, in an intriguing as it is impervious reorganization of the remains of solidarity beyond the walls in this prison society. These are efforts that all those directly involved in solidarity including myself, having to cope with in 'spaces' at times even more limited and certainly more uncertain than the 'prison-prison'. So in no way is it due to indifference or lack of personal and/or political solidarity if now and in the future I won't be able to maintain the bulk of correspondence and writing that I have done up until recently.”* We know that the transition of leaving prison is often difficult, even in the best of circumstances and with a much shorter sentence, and we feel the isolation from comrades and projects (slowly built up or maintained over years of prison) that he must be experiencing now. Hence, to show our respect and appreciation for Marco, and knowing that this text was unavailable in English, we found it fitting to include it here, to continue our shared trajectory. *“Always resisting, always contributing, always in solidarity (even by being silent... :-))”* (Marco).

## TAKING ON IMPERIAL SCIENCE

**September '17, Basel, Switzerland & Saint-Louis, France:** Tyres popped on vehicles of the following: *“Bouygues: this construction group builds and manages prisons and detention centers in France. The company is also involved in the construction of the nanotechnology center in Grenoble, and maintains the protected G.M. plantation site in the open air around Zurich[...]* Adecco: work agency. Because *“work is to life what oil is to the sea”*, as was so well formulated in a leaflet distributed during the labor law [ed. – see *Clarification on the Attack on the CGT Headquarters & On the Topic of 'Anonymous Disassociation'*]. [...] A car from the council of Haut-Rhin. We simply despise authority. Enedis: a French electricity company that is constantly being targeted for attacks [ed. – *ibid.*] because of its involvement in the nuclear waste storage project in Bure or for the installation of Linky



The graffiti, near industrial centres contributing to the degradation of the Patagonia Sea outside Huasco, Chile, reads “Marco Camenisch to the street!”, left in the desire to see him “free and wild[...] looking towards the infinite horizon”; as we hope the comrade can now once again, on the outside at last

smart electricity meters. [...] Siemens: for their work in favor of wider surveillance, for example connected video surveillance systems, facial recognition... ABB: a leading company in the field of automation and energy, which has disseminated its robots worldwide in the service of capitalism and would prefer to see people as machines [ed. – see *Tools of the Technology*]. Finally, a car each from Implenia, Alpiq and EAGB, actively participating in the unappreciated enlargement of Bässlergut prison.”

**16.04.17, Cremona, Italy:** Monsanto receive four molotovs against a headquarters; lab equipment and experimental seeds are destroyed, hundreds of thousands of euros damage. *‘Bayer & Monsanto, Criminal Marriage’* reads the graffiti, referring to the new merger between the two biotech giants. This is the fifth major anti-biotech attack in the area of Cremona since 2001...

**24.01.16, Santiago, Chile:** As a collaboration of ‘Circle of Individualists for Anarchy’ and ‘Kapibara Group’ (both of the Informal Anarchist Federation / International Revolutionary Front), some gain access to the science faculty of Andrés Bello University, place a timed incendiary (a mixture of potassium nitrate, gasoline and oil) and exit without being spotted or apprehended. “A proliferation of attacks and coordination of groups and individuals to hit harder and constantly against patriarchal civilization and its techno-industrial fabric, the path is arduous and uncertain, only our actions in the present reveal our real convictions.” The large facility is totally destroyed in the huge ensuing blaze.

**July 2015, Ospedaletto Euganeo, Italy:** *Mangimi Veronesi, animal breeders and feed producers, have been subject to protest since 2014 over the use of G.M. grains. Molotovs are placed under lorries loaded with fodder; 15 destroyed.*



“NO GMO, NO BREEDING”

**28.08.15, Louvain, Belgium:** Fire part-destroys the front wall of the nanotechnology and chemistry research centre of the Université Catholique, by placing a backpack containing

"Everywhere around us, science, business and governments have shaped the existent, placing us all in suspension on an artificial self-regulating scaffold that is anything but solid: namely, industrial-technological society. Over thousands of years of civilization, it is now condensing into its most total and global expression which is multinational capitalism, to whose harmful effects and illusions we are all forced to entrust our lives. With the stupid arrogance that throughout history has marked every dominant power, it cannot afford any questioning of itself and the present into which we are forced. Open to alterations, albeit always false solutions, only if they can reinforce its legitimacy, but that cannot continue to reproduce in a continuous spiral whose circles are increasingly shrinking around us asphyxiatingly. Where the internal bio- and nano-technologies of this spiral that is detrimental to the system itself are not simple and additional technological developments among many, but are the key technologies with which the whole edifice on which we are deported far away from our natural world is restoring and, inside of the techno-industrial spiral, representing the ring of the chain that goes to close the steel circle of dominion over our life and everything that exists. Where the profitability-concern of the owners and of the multinational corporations is not so much that the masses must become dominated by material progress, but about the "limits" of this world. Then comes the need to obtain new materials, new substances with new properties, new forms of energy production, new and 'improved' plant and animal species, new food applications, industrial and medical applications obtained by the manipulation of life and of matter. Innovations that, as with all the key innovations of civilization, are born out of military needs for imperialist war on the outside and inside, the trinity of conquest, control and exploitation. War, now more than ever, transcends the military field and has expanded its front, in fact, to every expression of the living and the material from the macro to the nano and even beyond the planet itself [ed. – see *New Technologies, Extraterrestrial Exploitation & the Future of Capitalism*]. Thus every productive sector is invested in these technologies, but no longer content with the narrowness of the research labs – even after it transformed [everything] along with space into one deadly and sickening landfill – is transforming the entire planet into a laboratory, a new living world – or rather a dying, engineered one. Not – as the great "greenwashing" campaigns of media terrorism and state want us to believe – to solve social and environmental disasters arising from the system, but always and as ever to reproduce this system of domination and exploitation with the end of completing once and for all the techno-industrial complex enclosure."

– *Call for an Escalated Anti-Genetic Engineering Struggle*

inflammable material and a detonator in the vicinity of the engine room.

**05.03.15, Itapetininga, Brazil:** 1,000 women from the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais occupy *FuturaGene Technology* and destroy seedlings of *G.M. eucalyptus*.

**06.01.14, Bristol, U.K.:** Bomb placed against the offices of construction firm *Vinci* "with the aim of cutting off power lines, scorching the exterior and starting a fire inside." *The company are building the "Biological Life Sciences Centre* soon to open at the University of Bristol [which] will offer courses for "the next generation of biologists" as well as current specialists, aiming to improve collaboration with the university's nanotechnology centre and just across from the Medical School's genetic engineering, vivisection and animal breeding labs. The world capitalist system sees advances in fields like this as key to the next round of discovery, enclosure and wealth creation. As the area around Bristol and Bath houses the biggest hi-tech design cluster in the world after America's Silicon Valley, this "revolution" is happening on our doorsteps, "with Bristol being an exciting and ideal place to carry out research over the coming years." [...] One of the main thrusts of this drive is synthetic biology, a disturbing practice using the latest technology for "rewriting and rebuilding natural systems to provide engineered surrogates." [ed. – For example, to make them produce pharmaceuticals or energy; unlike older genetic engineering which 'cuts and pastes' existing genes between species, synthetic biology creates new DNA modules programmed to self-assemble with other modules to create 'designer organisms' (mostly viruses /bacteria for now) capable of functions normally associated with mechanical production lines.] In 2012 a conference at the University of Bristol stated that synthetic biology "could become a driving force of the national economy," and the government have declared it a top research priority. The European Union has now awarded £3.3 million to the University of Bristol just to create "public awareness" promoting the practice. [W]e're moving fast into a future where even lifeforms "in nature" are the products of laboratory experiments, and nothing remains that isn't engineered somewhere along the line by a human-centred system of scientific totalitarianism."

**10.06.13, Toluca, Mexico:** Explosive attack on seat of the National Council of Science and Technology; it is the second time the same group bombs the place, and they also take credit for burning a police truck less than three weeks earlier. CONACYT, as well as G.M. "collaboration with the scientists of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), is also part of running the "Abacus" lab containing a supercomputer to develop

genetic sequencing, petroleum extraction, finance, market economics, aeronautic and automotive industry, nano-tech, logistics..."

**04.03.13, Naples, Italy:** 4 of the 6 pavilions of the Science City of Naples (and with them, this being the dense technological cluster of the city, dozens of start-ups) burn to the ground in a deliberate arson, with 50 million euros damages.

**07.10.12, Oakland, U.S.A.:** During a destructive anti-imperialist march, the *Oakland Scientific Facility* is among those damaged. "Countless lives contained, controlled, reduced, stolen, and destroyed by civilization, colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism. 11 years of war in Afghanistan, hundreds of years of colonization and my entire life of being socialized, categorized, identified [...] Fight Genocide, Destroy what is civilized."

**05.09.12, Buenos Aires, Argentina:** To "express solidarity with Marco Camenisch, who went on hunger strike", visit to the *Leloir Institute* "known to promote development of the disgusting nanotechnology, present and future of the technological system of control. There we unfurled a banner with which we greet our comrade and on leaving paint bombs and rocks full of our liberatory hatred were thrown." *Marco's strike, against the "global technoscientific, patriarchal, terrorist and totalitarian system of the multinationals and imperialist States", he dubbed 'Operation Fukushima'* (see *Return Fire vol.1 pg43*) after "the appalling pain and annihilation administered to life by the few bosses and many servants of civilization and progress for the power and wealth of the few. It could also be called Chernobyl, Muhleberg, Beznau, Lucens, Hiroshima, depleted uranium, IBM, Trino Vercellese, Superphoenix [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg79*], Ansaldo [ed. – *ibid.*], biotechnology and nanotechnology, asbestos, cancer, Deep Water Horizon [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg28*], Xstrata [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg40*], Monsanto, TAV [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; A Letter from Anarchist Comrade Anna Beniamino about Operation Scripta Manent & More...*], alternative energy..." It was in solidarity with repressed Italian anarchists (see *Return Fire vol.1 pg75/78*), and against daily harassments he endured in Lenzburg prison.

**04.09.12, Toluca, Mexico:** "[L]ike the Teocintle [ed. – wild maize species considered a harmful weed by agri-business] corrodes malignantly domesticated corn fields," three litres of petrol deployed to torch a CIMMYT minibus used daily to transport international scientists to a research center, which "among other activities, develops Sustainable Modernization of Traditional Agriculture Program (MasAgro), in collusion with the Mexican state through the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA) and agencies such as the Inter-Development Bank (IDB); whose job is to promote genetically modification or "improvement" among small farmers to increase production/domestication of maize and wheat seeds, and to try to counter the same problems that these technologies have created (soil erosion, water scarcity...) [yet] if biotechnologists house 28,000 seed samples of maize to "guard" ancient biodiversity, or if GM foods are labeled, "controlled" or "perfected" for the purposes of this perpetual monolithic civilisation, this would only be the cleverest trick the system." *Informal Anarchist Federation / Earth Liberation Front 'Anti-Civilisation Fraction'* are again responsible.

April 2012, Trento, Italy:

During the inauguration of a new laboratory of IBM (see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg73), opponents are present with megaphones to disrupt. In addition to the Swiss nanotechnology centre mentioned above, the event is promoting IBM's "model of the city of the future [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg31], where mobility, security and surveillance systems, access to the cities, the identification, financial transactions, medical systems, are all connected to each other through a technological infrastructure of ubiquitous and pervasive computing. It is already happening: in Stockholm IBM have created the video control system for the license plates of cars entering the city, whose owner is automatically charged the fee for the movement in the centre, and has also worked for the New York police Real Time Crime Center, a database obtained by integrating all the data from the different institutional repositories to create personal profiles of any suspected displayed directly by the individual police officer."

**23.06.10, Pulley, Switzerland:** Despite 24 hour guard, a double fence, CCTV and plain clothes cops in the surrounding streets, an experimental field of G.M. wheat is attacked with herbicides. Unlike in 2008 and 2009 when the field was also 'decontaminated', the research centre this year did not issue a press release about the attack. "Opposition to genetic engineering is part of a wider opposition to the total control of society and life that is being created thanks to the development of nano and biotechnology. For these reasons, we also want to express our solidarity through concrete actions with those who oppose this technoscientific capitalist system, and in particular with Marco Camenisch, Silvia, Costa and Billy... [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; Good News At Last From Italy!*], revolutionary prisoners who are now jailed in Switzerland because they understood words are not enough..."

## A GREEN ANARCHIST CRITIQUE OF SCIENCE

Humans use processes where we start from experience, form conjectures, and then test predictions based on tentative explanations. We compare results with our peers. Our evolution of trekking, foraging, tracking, hunting all involved this process.

**These things constitute a form of "science".** While even this encounters the problem of induction, the problem of the uncertainty of the future remaining despite previously clear experiences, the dominant culture embraces a distinct form of science that has its own features. Harmful features.

Empire has a specific form of science. Imperial science begins by attempting to remove the actual physical world from the understanding by the use of a sterile laboratory to disconnect, isolate, and reassemble parts; these attempts can expedite access to certain claims on knowledge but devalue intimacy, participation, and co-determination, which lead to narcissism and over time cultivate hostility to aliveness and wildness.

**Imperial science conceals its implicit values and filters (observability, detachment, objectifiability, quantifiability, predictability, controllability, uniformity), proclaims itself "neutral", and discards or disciplines the anomalies and mysteries that do not fit in its framework,** potentially demolishing their immense subjective worth.

Imperial science prefers unidirectional cause-and-effect understandings while ignoring interdependent, co-determining connections. Imperial science possesses a bias toward instruments and numbers, and assumes a disparate, mechanistic universe. It also often implicitly maintains the philosophical system of Western rationality which reasons through the use of hierarchical binary oppositions, e.g. subject/object, mind/body, matter/spirit, masculine/feminine, even if reality does not always fit such a perspective. And imperial science pushes itself as the only acceptable path to understanding.

Imperial science divides accessibility to methodologies and tools by specialization and class,

creating a priestly class of expert authorities that mediate to the public the Discovered Truth of the Universe. With imperial science a small professional cadre actively confines deeper understanding to within their own compartment through models and instruments beyond the lay person's awareness or access. It moves ever further toward abstraction beyond the lay person's ability to confirm or refute, developing characteristics of religious dogma.

Imperial science divorces itself from ecological ethics, instead embracing exclusively purposes utilitarian to certain human cultures. It attempts to magnify control over lifeforms and landbases and further human pursuit of all knowledge regardless of the cost (sometimes excepting white humans or all humans, oftentimes not), facilitating the self-destructive project of Dominion. "Welcome to the Machine", page 41, [Stanley] Aronowitz speaking:

*"The point of science – and this may or may not be true of individual scientists – is to make the world subject to human domination. If they can abstract, and then they can predict on the basis of that abstraction, then they can try, at both the human and natural levels, to use that prediction in order to exert control. Genetic engineering is a great example, although almost any field will work as well. The ideology underlying its conceptualization is that we cannot and will not depend on nature to yield its own productivity, both in terms of its own development and human need. We're going to intervene, because the process of maturation has to be faster, the output has to be more plentiful, production has to be cheaper, humans have to be more in control of the process."*

Imperial science promotes the human exceptionalism responsible for leading us to long-term disaster (planetary biotic collapse). But forms of comprehension do not have to yield forms of domination.

**Humans also use very unscientific elements to successfully make decisions:** intuition, instinct, imagination, inspiration, associations. And we cannot objectively quantify such things as personality (e.g. propensity for self-care), attitude

(e.g. optimistic or pessimistic), self-esteem (e.g. desire for self-preservation), stress (e.g. subjective perception of pain), or willpower (e.g. how determined one feels). These fundamentally unscientific elements of decision-making and character prove essential to our own wellness but imperial science pushes them to the margins. Cultures with other forms of science however respect those elements' place and value. These elements also do not usually or even often fit solidly within the science-or-religion dichotomy; we cannot reduce these decision-making features or influences upon the world to someone's belief or non-belief in an Invisible Sky Daddy or Magic Man, and yet they remain unscientific.

Imperial science can certainly help us understand certain information and trends, industrial science especially, because it comes at a devil's bargain of sacrificing any other consideration: we know how calories work because the Nazis wanted to know how little they could feed Jewish death camp laborers. Calories do exist as a concept measuring a phenomenon, and might yield useful insights, but we cannot reduce understanding to just numbered measurements, and viewing lifeforms, landscapes, or the totality of matter in solely utilitarian lenses enables abuse. Imperial science has no conflict with, and in fact has higher compatibility with, for instance, Nazism, whereas the hunting methods of traditional indigenous peoples intimately entwined to their landbases, based at least in some part on empiricism, testing educated guesses, and peer review, have no receptiveness to practices that disregard their spiritual place as members in an interdependent web. **We must not accept the reasoning behind attempts to grind up every form of life in machine gears just to squeeze out some new insight that will further a subsection of humans' control of the world.** Imperial science tries as long as possible to avoid philosophical and ethical challenge; as a litany of experiments with coerced use of surgery, pathogens, radiation, psychological torture, physiological torture, and pharmaceuticals under the guise of "necessary research" confirm, from antiquity to modernity, Empire makes science a heartless terror; intimacy and balance put it back in its rightful place.

# MARKET PRESSURED TO TEMPORARILY DROP G.M. PRODUCT LINES AFTER CONTAMINATION CAMPAIGN CLAIMED, LOMBARDY

[ed. – Lombardy is the most populous and richest region in the Italy, home to Milan, and one of the richest regions in Europe. The following action took place while the European Union pretended to consider ruling against use of glyphosate herbicide.]

That year, 2016, had already seen an Italian mobilisation against the European Authority for Food Safety (based in Parma), “the internationally recognized body to which the European Commission refers to concerning toxicities such as GMOs, pesticides, chemicals and nanotechnology. [C]lose relations allow a continuous exchange of administrators, scientists, managers and the inevitable technical staff: what better way to permit a capillary distribution of GMOs also in Europe. Thanks to contamination thresholds tolerated in food and seeds, GM feed, transgenic crops in the open field... the work of spreading has been underway for too long. Europe has given itself a body called upon to guarantee the safety of every toxicity along the lines of the American FDA [Food & Drug Administration]. To protect, as well as the interests of the biotech-chemical-pharmaceutical multinationals, an economic, political and social system that clings to the new bio-nano-technological revolution, producing more and more environmental and social disasters that underlie techno-industrial development, of which the manipulations of the living are deadly. We are not for the creation of a safer, transparent and democratic EFSA[...] Dealing with technico-scientific power and its principal manifestations – biotechnology, nanotechnology, computer science, neuroscience – is not just focusing on some aspect of this particularly harmful society. [...] Some call it green economy, others scientific progress and yet others catastrophe management, covering the areas that once redesigned will widen the network where all the relations of power are developed in every link, such as the launching of a GMO or the manipulation of the germ line, from where there is no return.” (The writers also called the mobilisation in solidarity with Silvia, Billy and Costa: see **Rebels Behind Bars; Good News At Last From Italy!**)

This action followed in the footsteps of hugely successful anarchist consumer sabotages wrought by in Greece. First in 2013 during the pivotal Christmas period (and then again in this year in the same timeframe) in solidarity with Italian prisoners Nicola Gai and Alfredo Cospito (see **Rebels Behind Bars; A Letter from Anarchist Comrade Anna Beniamino about Operation Scripta Manent & More...**), batches of Coca-Cola (a company known to produce G.M. for ingredients) were tampered with: “This way we provoke a boycott, not begging for the consumers’ “sensitive ecological consciousness” but based on the decisiveness of direct action instead. Our goal is not, in any case, to harm someone who might consume these mass production commodities, that’s why we send this claim of responsibility before we start placing these products back on the shelves.” Coca-Cola announced a precautionary removal of “every single plastic bottle 500ml PET of Coca-Cola Light and Nestea (of all tastes)”, to millions loss in their profits and high publicity. In the second wave, various Nestlé and Unilever brand products were also contaminated and had to be withdrawn.

While so far all such actions (initiated by the animal liberationists in past decades) have successfully avoided injury to random people (more than can be said for the bombings, arsons or even rock-throwing that we otherwise accept as if they only risked the attacker and their specified target) this cell doesn’t back away from the importance of articulating the anti-social element (see **The Matter of Knowing Who We Are**) in their critique of apathy. We reproduce this not because we agree with every point they make (see footnotes), but because it opens the doors to continuing many important discussions in the anarchist space, while explaining yet another method available to disrupt business-as-usual (though we ourselves prefer forms of action that don’t rely on pressuring the capitalists and state to do something but rather do it ourselves – ‘direct action’ as we’d call it – we are not moralists on this point).

Shortly after this Lombardian contamination campaign, an explosive parcel detonated inside the Milan premises of bio-tech firm Algamundi SRL, a start-up company that had won a competition in the Milan EXPO (see the supplement to **Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?**), leaving one professional lucky to get away with bruises and hospital examination: an almost identical parcel was intercepted at the mail department of the EFSA. Police suspect anarchists, mentioning the exposé published the year before by the comrades of Fennir magazine on the activities of Algamundi SRL... Domesticators out of our genes, and our lives. Wildness remains.]

“For now we have used the enemy’s instruments against it. We have fed civilization with the poison it produces...”  
Nicola and Alfredo Cell  
F.A.I./F.R.I.

## Choices of Attack

Safety is a recurrent theme in today’s industrialized society, which safe it cannot feel in that it spreads hatred, violence and poison back and forth over itself daily. By periodically establishing the tolerability levels of the cancers that it itself develops, it is attempting to accustom people to accepting them. So ‘fine particles’ are allowed to pile up to within a certain threshold, torture in prison should be limited to denying prisoners any kind of reading inside the most punitive prison units, water is potable if it only contains a given amount of heavy metals... So what is ‘sure’ is just the constant poisoning we are subjected to; it is power alone that establishes the recommended daily dose.

We decided to highlight how unmanageable these limits are today. We overcame those that could tie down anarchist action a long time ago, turning it into a mere cumbersome repetition of violent slogans and innocuous practices, as we savoured the beauty of discovering and reinventing new means of attack each time. The limits we are facing today are instead those that establish the safety of a food product.

If the average consumer feels protected by the controls **the very fabricators of noxious substances apply, with this action we are making clear the impracticability of a mechanism of self-control in industries such as food, chemicals, agriculture, engineering (which are coming to resemble each other more and more), where it's not true that the consumers' health comes before profit, but occurs precisely to the detriment of**



their health in an endless circle of poison-antidote-poison.

Currently any food product intended for human consumption is accompanied with a maximum residue of herbicides that it may contain ‘according to law’. We decided to increase the amount of these residues that can normally be found on the shelves of all the supermarkets, concealed in products that are passed off as safe.

Starting from the week between May and June, while most people are getting ready to elect those who will make decisions about their lives, we are gradually replacing some of the products in the supermarkets with ‘ours’ with higher maximum residue limits. So far we have only replaced the number of products that can be seen in the photos attached. We intend to finish our stocking by the end of June, the final deadline we have decided for this action.

Each week we will add an injection of poison to the water-poison solution that we replace. We will do this because we only tamper with substances that the food industry uses as it likes, starting with only a small amount of poison because, unlike the white coats, we don’t know what effects it might have. So, we’re interested in being effective, not in playing word games. This is our first test. Its continuation and exacerbation will depend on to what extent economic and ‘social’ interests come into conflict.

Our operation will cover the whole of the Lombardy region, making a fool of various distribution chains that have been visited, studied and chosen for the best outcome of this campaign against poisoning. **What we are aiming for is clearly withdrawal**

from the market of the products we have used, in the period of time decided by us, but we also want to throw the contradictions that the whole of society is based on in everyone's face, even of those who try to look the other way. For we know that a coat of green paint won't be enough to clean up a world now addicted to its own noxiousness, because allowing oneself to be poisoned little by little is equivalent to dying day after day.

We shall begin with a technical description of our operation: the poison used is Monsanto's Roundup [herbicide], a bottle of liquid concentrated per 560 square metres. Our kit: a syringe, a funnel, a 1.5-litre bottle of water, tweezers, a screwdriver, a fine-tipped paintbrush, glue. The products poisoned: Misura soya biscuits, Suzi wan soya sauce, Kikkoman soya sauce, Save soya sauce (in the 'traditional' and 'Japanese style' versions).

Obviously we try to give the investigating cops as few clues as possible, which is why some of the attached photos have been retouched (we are not professional photographers and we had to make up for a lack of technical knowledge, as well as distractions during 'posing'). The batches and other product codes have been covered or erased in order to prevent targeted batches being withdrawn while leaving others on sale.

We began by adding an injection of Roundup to the bottle of water, but as we said this is only the early stage solution. We took care to avoid any possible damage to the product packaging and we found a perfect way to violate their fake food safety for each of them. We took a syringeful of sauce out of all the sauces and added an injection of the solution. As for the biscuits we injected a syringe of Roundup solution into the bag and shook it. Eyebrow tweezers helped us open both types of Save sauce. We inserted one end into the back of the opening of the cap, then a screwdriver allowed us to take off the cap with its seal intact. To close them again we just had to push down on the cap. As for the Kikkoman sauces it sufficed to unscrew the cap along with the plastic film, take off the anti-drip cap and do the same in reverse after the substitution. The procedure for the Suzi wan sauce was also pretty simple. Pulling the cap hard along with the seals and pressing everything back to redo the package was quick and

clean. As for the Misura biscuits, we began at the bottom of the package by slightly opening the heated seal, just enough to pass our needle through, then repackaged them with paintbrush and glue.

This done, the first couriers resupplied the supermarkets for this initial test.

**The choice of protagonists for our action was all too easy.** Various technology sectors extend their interests to the food industry so as to incorporate it. The same companies that invest in technological research and aim to have genetically modified organisms (GMOs) passed into the world are at the forefront of the chemical pesticide sector, also becoming actual owners of seeds and crops. Patents copyright anything at all.

Monsanto has a crucial role in this field. Born in the early 1900s it had an immediate impact on the chemical sector during the Second World War thanks to an increase in the use of DDT [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg37**], which was sprayed over entire populations and passed off as panacea, concealing its real toxicity. Since then it has been engaged in a long trajectory of political intrigue, impositions and coercion through which it became one of the major economic giants in the world, to such an extent that it has attracted the attention of another giant, Bayer, which is negotiating a merger precisely at this time. The Monsanto empire ranges from chemicals to agriculture, passing through genetic engineering. It was responsible for the spreading of Agent Orange (100% dioxin) in Vietnam, the cover-up of toxicological data concerning its PCB [polychlorinated biphenyl] patents, research in the nuclear field, up to our time. First in line in the race for the appropriation of every right over the existent, it was quick to take an interest in equating GMOs with normal crops.



Since Monsanto's 1996 incursion, Argentina's entire soy crop (the world's third-largest) and nearly all its corn and cotton are genetically-modified and glyphosate is used roughly eight to ten times more per acre than in the U.S.A., with cancer rates two to four times higher than the national average in affected croplands, as well as higher rates of hypothyroidism, birth defects and chronic respiratory illnesses. This farmworker Fabian Tomasi, after routinely handling the substance for three years, is wasting into a living skeleton from neurological disorder 'polyneuropathy'.

Thanks to this sort of 'equivalence in substance' introduced in the 1990s in the US by one of its future directors infiltrated through the watchdog agencies, it managed to avoid testing and get the go ahead in relation to its new creations. After trading in a vast range of herbicides, through genetic engineering it managed to obtain patents on many GM plants that were resistant to its own herbicides or which were even able to develop the herbicides within themselves<sup>[1]</sup>. **It is here, in this making all aspects of our lives artificial and thinking that their unscrupulous actions will be met with vile resignation, that our circle closes.** Roundup is the most widely used herbicide in the world. Its active component is glyphosate, a herbicide which can now be found in most ground water. It is related to various types of cancer, kidney conditions, Parkinsons and Alzheimers by the holders of scientific truth themselves. Monsanto was granted a patent for Roundup in 2002 from which followed a series of GM crops resistant to the herbicide being introduced into the market.

Among them Roundup Ready soya (practically the species most cultivated in the world) has enslaved thousands of farmers to this multinational as they are being forced to pay concession rights in order to be able to plant. The 'green revolution', as the vast operation of spreading GMOs throughout the world led by the 'humanitarian' Rockefeller Foundation was called<sup>[2]</sup>, has been made

possible their dependency on of the 'seeds of the bosses' thanks to financing of farmers in difficulty. While the litres of this pesticide sprayed over the soya plantations all over the world run into millions, one more syringe shot is a drop in the ocean<sup>[3]</sup>.



As the European Union keep on suspending judgement over the carcinogenic effects of glyphosate, we are throwing the problem back on the plate.

## To the Accomplices, To the Insurgents

We were tired of thoughts of freedom atrophied by the political realism of the theoreticians of the revolution “not here, not now”, and of crippled actions lacking continuity, effectiveness and communicative clarity, so we decided to take a turning point in our lives and projectualities with this first contribution to the struggle against the noxiousness of civilization and against the development of the economic strategies of *dominion in an eco-sustainable style*. Our turning point came about with the kind of action that we have chosen. To a form of now consolidated attack, always and anyway effective, we have added a new poisoning of the enemy’s merchandise, drop by drop. A dripping of poison that fights against and highlights the daily global poisoning that hyper-technological, consumerist, alienated and alienating society is imposing.

## This homeopathic administration of their poisons is showing up the daily reality of self-poisoning that industrialized civilization is inflicting on bodies and minds.

The turning point was also the decision to enter the seas of the debate that has been bouncing from one side of the globe to the other thanks to the actions which, from that far off 2003, have been carried out by various and different individuals and groups that adhere to the Informal Anarchist Federation [*F.A.I.*] and its further extension the International Revolutionary Front [*F.R.I.*], as they continue to give living and stimulating perspectives to the thought-action binomial that is at the root of anarchy. **Throughout the years we have read the dialogue that has been established through actions and claims: it alternates from critical contributions and basic methods to slogans and collections of greetings often with simplistic reductions of problematics.** We are going to try to dissect some of the problems and undo a few basic knots, which for us are sources of useful discussions.



– The legal-illegal dichotomy is created by power to the extent that it wants to raise the measure of its tolerance, based on social pressures and tensions and from its own risk assessment (we see for example

the evolution of so-called anti-terrorism legislation [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg5*], repression in the streets, etc.). Legality and recuperation go hand in hand, so it is we who favour certain practices, not in as far as they are illegal, but in as far as they are more effective. We simply realise that if we have to face a problem in an incisive and resolute way, the solution naturally ends up in illegality given that the legal instruments ‘offered’ to us (counter-information, raising social awareness of a problem, demonstrations and protests) do not satisfy us, nor do they interest us<sup>[4]</sup>.

– We are rebels, insurgents not insurrectionists. We rebel every day, filing away at our own, individual chains. We have no masses to educate, to foment for ‘the coming insurrection’. We are not preparing any ground by trying to ‘unite the specific movement and the people, guerrilla and insurrectional perspectives’. We are not seeking roles of leaders or vanguards, present or future. After all, today’s revolutionary leaders will be the hangmen of tomorrow’s rebels as soon as they put their arses on a bench. That is why we hate politics, which through mediation turns the free dialectical flow between thought and action gangrenous. We have neither the time nor the desire to build a long-term revolutionary process. It isn’t the sun of the future that dazzles us but the lightening in the clear sky of an act of revolt, chosen, meditated, planned and above all urgently necessary against the ever more rapid advance of the machinery of dominion.

– We adhere to the *F.A.I.* in critical continuity, critically because we understand the risk of transforming a free network – in time and space – into a platform. **To propose an ‘informal platform of polymorphous anarchist action’ with structures and infrastructures means to cage a beast that must by its very nature stay wild. Action is multiform, multifaceted and iridescent like life, but multiformity cannot become an easy slogan to conceal the defects of the action itself like a bank of fog.** We are in the streets, in anarchist bookshops, at events, concerts, in squats every day; but if we were to relate all this to the real attack on power that we feel is urgent and necessary, we would be deceiving ourselves. It would mean levelling anarchy and raising what is, or at this point should be, anarchist ‘daily life’ to a means in itself.

– We don’t want to compensate for the practical organizational lacks of single individuals with ‘structures’ or worse ‘infrastructures’; mere union does not mean strength, quite the opposite, structures sclerotize action<sup>[5]</sup>. On the contrary, we believe that the old hypothesis of a network of comrades who, without knowing one another, come into dialogue

through actions, as the first text that launched this informal projectuality [of the *F.A.I.*] proposes: technical/theoretical/practical growth through the developing of the actions. *“To reconcile organization and theoretical/practical debate with the anonymity of groups/single individuals is possible by means of a dialogue diffused through the actions, which, besides giving their specific destructive discourse, also carry other messages (through the adopted methods and means, the goal being communication), independently of the material damage.”*

– Spontaneism is not synonymous with informality and even less does informality mean disorganization and superficiality. Actions are planned spontaneously from the idea of one or more insurgent minds, they consolidate through critique and analysis and go on to solve tactical and logistical problems, to then bloom like poisonous flowers in the fields of dormant society.

– Informality doesn’t mean meeting with ‘other political affinity groups’ so as to coordinate the struggles, but informality is the antidote to political delegating. It is the method that makes relations between individuals qualitatively better, avoiding interweaving ‘political’ relations for the sake of quantitative growth. Informality is open but not transversal.

– We adhere to the International Revolutionary Front in critique and continuity. In critique because we are not an ‘armed organization’ nor do we want to become one; nor do we feel the need to point it out in relation to the disarming and reformist critiques of the mainstream. On the contrary we are proud to be part of the chaotic front of comrades at war with society, face to face with the enemy, arms in hand. Coming back to the text from which the Informal Anarchist Federation was born: *“Moreover whoever is part of the Informal Anarchist Federation is a militant of it in all respects only in the specific moment of the action and its preparation; it doesn’t invest the comrade’s entire lives and projectuality, which leads to putting any armed-struggle specialism out of the way once and for all.”*

– We are individualists not collectivists. The drive at the basis of our action is individual. We create free and unstable associations of individuals in order to make the action more effective. Collective struggle claims lead to delegating, the seed of politics, and to reformism. Stable organizations of synthesis crystallize the container instead of strengthening the contents: they give professional politicians a springboard and the lazy *an alternative* and the shield of numbers (even if small).

We don’t underestimate the fundamental importance of dialectics among comrades,

be they inside or outside prison; for this reason we are thankful for the writings of the comrades in prison (Nikos Romanos [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg75**], Alfredo Cospito, Nicola Gai, the imprisoned comrades of the CCF [ed. – see **Clarification on the Attack on the CGT Headquarters & On the Topic of 'Anonymous Disassociation'**]...) for the stimuli they offered our minds and practices, and the written claims of the comrades who adhere to F.A.I. (CCF Urban Guerrilla Cell, Kapibara Group [ed. – see **Nanotechnology & Transparency**], Fireworks Committee for an Extraordinary Year [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; A Letter from Anarchist Comrade Anna Beniamino about Operation Scripta Manent & More...**]...), which albeit different and often contradictory have helped us dissolve doubts and pushed us to concretise our action.

*The great challenge in these times is both mad and necessary.*

*Mad that scattered handfuls of dreamers are trying to fight dominion, necessary that they do it.*

**Danaus Plexippus<sup>[6]</sup> Cell  
INFORMAL ANARCHIST FEDERATION  
/ INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY FRONT**

**First week of June 2016**

*'Til next time*

1. ed. – Despite the company line that GM crops reduce pesticide use, many drastically increase pesticide use through the promotion of superweeds – some of which cannot be killed, except with increasingly large amounts of pesticides and in some cases flamethrowers. Plants engineered to withstand repeated spraying also have the unique ability to absorb large amounts of it and remain healthy, earning them the title “pesticide plants”. All over the world these pesticide plants are also fed to the animals on the meat, milk, eggs production lines. The longest-term feeding study ever on GMOs found that rats fed a lifetime diet of GM maize became as ill as those fed the herbicide glyphosate (Roundup). The increasing introduction of GMOs is leading to an increased use of animal experiments, as this is a

requirement for them to be developed into a commercial crop for human consumption.

2. ed. – Actually the so-called Green Revolution pre-dated GMOs, though one continues the work of the other: “Genetically modified crops, for example, are regularly sold to us as a means of “feeding the world.” But why is the world hungry? At least in part because of the previous wave of agricultural improvements [sic] – the so-called Green Revolution, which between the 1940s and 1970s promoted a new form of agriculture that depended upon high levels of pesticides and herbicides, new agricultural technologies, and high-yielding strains of crops. The Green Revolution is trumpeted by progressives as having supposedly “fed a billion people” who would otherwise have starved. And maybe it did; but then we had to keep feeding them – or should I say us? – and our children. In the meantime it had been discovered that the pesticides and herbicides were killing off vast swaths of wildlife [ed. – and by 2000 in India as many humans were dying annually from these as died at the notorious Bhopal pesticide factory explosion], and the high-yield monoculture crops were wrecking both the health of the soil and the crop diversity, which in previous centuries had helped prevent the spread of disease and reduced the likelihood of crop failure. It is in this context that we now have to listen to lectures from the neo-environmentalists [ed. – including former chief of UK Greenpeace, to name one] and others insisting that GM crops are a moral obligation if we want to feed the world and save the planet: precisely the arguments that were made last time around. GM crops are an attempt to solve the problems caused by the last progress trap; they are also the next one. I would be willing to bet a lot of money that in forty years’ time, the successors of the neo-environmentalists will be making precisely the same arguments about the necessity of adopting the next wave of technologies needed to dig us out of the trap that GM crops have dropped us neatly into. Perhaps it will be vat-grown meat, or synthetic wheat, or some nano-bio-gubbins as yet unthought of. Either way, it will be vital for growth and progress, and a moral necessity. As Kurt Vonnegut would have said: “so it goes”” (Dark Ecology). Indeed, as you could read in the claim for an Anonymous web attack on Monsanto, “In 2006, AGRA, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, was established with funding from Bill Gates and The Rockefeller Foundation. Among the other founding members of AGRA, we find: Monsanto, Novartis, Sanofi-Aventis, GlaxoSmithKline, Procter and Gamble, Merck, Mosaic, Pfizer, Sumitomo Chemical and Yara. The fact that these corporations are either chemical or pharmaceutical manufacturers is no coincidence.” At the G8 summit of world leaders in 2013, the British prime minister pledged £395 million from the UK Aid budget to support private initiatives involved in spreading GM crops in Africa; an investment under the guise of aid, to lock small-scale farmers into a dependency on corporate providers of seeds and chemical fertilisers.

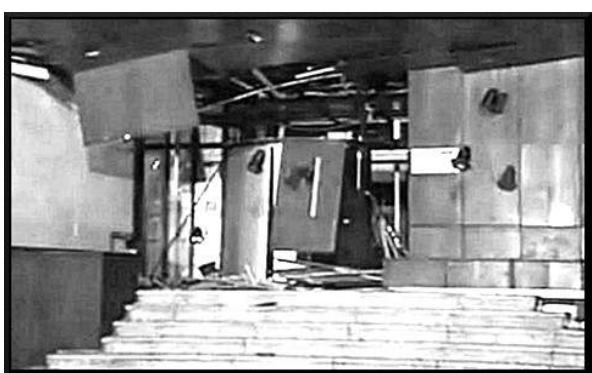
3. ed. – “Finally, we must take into account a factor that works to the detriment of natural biodiversity and environmental equilibrium: the genetic pollution affecting the flow of genes that normally takes

place between cultivated plants, wild plants and variants of the cultivated species. This genetic pollution will confer upon these plants certain undesirable properties and capacities for resistance that could have a deleterious effect on the rhizosphere, and not just on farmland. [...] As Monsanto’s director of corporate communications boldly proclaimed: “Monsanto shouldn’t have to vouchsafe the safety of biotech food. Our interest is in selling as much of it as possible. Assuring its safety is the FDA’s job” [...] One will get a better appreciation of the gist of this declaration if one considers the fact that Monsanto occupies responsible positions in that very same regulatory institution... As with the nuclear industry, once again the regulator and the regulated are one and the same” (Some Enemies of the Best of All Transgenic Worlds).

4. ed. – Much could be said about such a simplistic dichotomy between illegal actions; we tend to agree with some Barcelona comrades on this matter. “With this communiqué, we wish to claim the following actions, as part of a struggle for the destruction of the State, Capital, patriarchy, and any system of domination, a struggle for the free creation of voluntary and solidaristic relations at the global and local level; in other words, a struggle for anarchy. May 5, at night, we told a child the story of the maquis [ed. – anti-fascist partisans] and the anarchist struggle against Franco and against democracy [ed. – see **Who Is It?**]. May 13, we cooked a healthy meal for a comrade who has a chronic illness. May 17, we wrote a letter to a comrade imprisoned for participating in a riot. June 12, we took care of the infant of some friends who suffer economic precarity and the imposed obligation of wage labor. June 16, we spoke publicly with our neighbors about the need to burn the banks and attack the police in order to realize our dreams. June 19, we told some leftist activists that the masked-ones were not police infiltrators but ourselves, and that it was necessary and good to mask up and take the streets with force. June 20, we gifted vegetables from our garden to friends and neighbors, without money or exchange. Why do we claim these actions? In the last months, we have also barricaded roads with dumpsters, burned banks, injured journalists, smashed shop windows, and attacked cops. For us, the attacks against the system are essential to our struggle. But we’ve fooled ourselves. A struggle does not consist only in attacks. The attacks are not more important than the need to care for ourselves, to preserve and spread our collective history, to create relations based in the gift, solidarity, and reciprocity, to imagine new worlds and new struggles, to confront our isolation and establish subversive and honest relationships with people outside of the categoric and political ghetto in which the Spectacle hides us” (Communiqué for Anarchist Actions in Barcelona & Response to the Nihilist Comrades).

5. ed. – For a more nuanced account of anarchist organisation, we recommend the relevant sections of ‘A Wager on the Future’.

6. ed. – The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is considered an iconic pollinator species. A 2016 study attributed a decade’s ten-fold decline in overwintering numbers of the eastern North American monarch population to the loss of breeding habitat (namely the many species of milkweed), highly correlated with the adoption of herbicide-tolerant G.M. corn and soy, which now constitute 89% and 94% of these U.S. crops respectively, with heavy glyphosate.



**Bombing by the Earth Liberation Front of the ultra-polluting genetic-engineers BASF's Netherlands headquarters, in Arnhem, 16.04.96**

# 'THE MATTER OF KNOWING WHO WE ARE'

The bourgeois definition of class society, delineated by essential or cultural differences, went out of date a long time ago with the universalization of a consumer culture, which unites bourgeois elements with proletarian elements and newer elements. If in the past anarchist companions<sup>[1]</sup> could throw a few orsini bombs<sup>[2]</sup> into the Liceu Theater it is because in that epoch only the bourgeoisie could be found there.<sup>[3]</sup> Currently, the average customer in a cinema in Nou Barris will be poorer than the average customer in Sarrià<sup>[4]</sup>, but there is no defined line between the two groups; neither will consist exclusively of owners, politicians, and their wives and both groups are probably watching the same film, a radically significant difference with the prior epoch.

It is even clearer that the Marxist definition of classes is no longer in effect. If we understand classes as a difference in the relation to the means of production, currently very few people are actually owners of anything. Nearly all the means of production are in the hands of banks or corporations whose directors, that is to say, the wealthy, earn a wage. An incredibly high wage, but a wage nonetheless, and if they don't do their job well, they can be fired (even democratically, by the stockholders). Sometimes they're even sent off to prison. Meanwhile, an ever growing part of the poor are also being paid with stocks in their own companies; ever more of them have access to capital, even if it is in miserable quantities. **Rich and poor exist, without a doubt, but tied to the system with mechanisms that are more and more equal.** It is precisely the unification of their relation to the means of production that has dissipated the difference between them.

And if the system no longer needs classes to reproduce itself and if there was neither rupture nor revolution in the dethroning of the bourgeoisie (belying the Marxist thesis, which confused the relation between economic power and political power), by what force does it govern?

[Put another way], if the son of immigrants can become president of France or of the United States, if there are poor people who spend their lives imitating rich people and the system can get rid of any one of its directors, even sending them to prison to reinforce the illusion of justice, how do we recognize the enemy?



**The guidelines of the class war, in those times when we all seemed to belong to one class or another, obviated an important truth right up until the historical moment in which the good proletarians began to convert themselves into revolutionary bureaucrats. The revealed truth is that the enemy is not a class but a point of view, a subjectivity, and all of those who look at their lives from above, whether a banker or an immigrant mother on welfare, have taken the side of domination.**

The *comisocrats*<sup>[5]</sup> of 15M who feared spontaneity and needed to centralize information and all decision-making spaces; the employees who agreed to salary cuts in order to save the company; the citizens who identify with their politicians; the syndicalists who take on the problematic of raising production and the progressives who take on the problematic of security, crime, and terrorism; anarchists in '36 who got themselves off on the opportunity to join the government and put their supposedly libertarian economic theories into practice<sup>[6]</sup>; the activists who care about their image in the media; the scientists who reduce climate change and mass extinction to carbon levels and temperature statistics.

The enemy is a subjectivity, it is falling into the trap of putting the needs of order above our own desires. The most profoundly rebellious act is to understand oneself as a being that lives through an entire web of other living beings, **or, to put**

**it another way, a being of the world.** Once we have replaced in our imaginary the commune of citizens or the commune of producers, which is to say that of slaves and machines, with the commune of worldly beings; once we know in our bones that we are the heirs of a tradition of rebellion against a process of colonization begun in a first instant *by ourselves* in the form of autochthonous patriarchies and later carried out by a new State and its nascent capitalism *led*. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg87*; then there is nothing else but to struggle with all our strength and across the length of our lives, struggle with more force than that which can be added up in the few years it falls on us to live through, because in our struggle we concentrate a continuity of rebellion that has lasted centuries and will last for centuries more.

Once we wipe that colonization clean from our beings and understand as something alien and imposed all thinking linked to the State, including the most democratic, the most civic, the most progressive, our utopias will no longer betray us like so many times in the past. Once we understand not only the hierarchies but also *order, democracy, production, equality, and unity* as a violent imposition, all the recuperators in our midst will start to look like invading Martians, and it will be that much more difficult for them to trick us. **For all these reasons the communication and diffusion of other imaginaries and a history of our own is vital.**

The social war is this: a struggle against the structures of power that colonize us and train us to view the world from the perspective of the needs of power itself,

through the metaphysical lens of domination, in which the universe has a center and follows laws and can be quantified and assigned value. The prize for winning the social war is not physical (the taking of factories and land) but metaphysical (the reappearance of the world).

### The Social War in the Beginning

Having come to this point, we can assume that in the beginning, we are quite alone in our social war. The few places where there is general support for a struggle against progress and order tend to be indigenous territories where people still remember their colonization, have never surrendered to it and have collaborated with it less than have the people of fully conquered lands. In the West, the few generalized struggles also have something to do with anticolonial struggles, as in Euskal Herria [the Basque Country], Ireland, or among the descendants of slaves in North America, but given that for a long time they have understood their anticolonial struggle in national terms, they have swallowed the metaphysic and the social relations of their colonizers and, as such, are fighting to reproduce another model of the dominant civilization, with a different flag and other holidays.<sup>[7]</sup>

To fight against a colonization of which hardly any popular memory remains is, in the beginning, to appear crazy. In a schizophrenic society, the most coherent<sup>[8]</sup> people must lack shame. Only the boldest person can be the first to break a norm when they see that norm is oppressive. In an age when very few people understand themselves as combatants in a social war, they will be isolated and as such they will think affinity is the most important characteristic in their struggle. Simply to exist and begin to gain visibility, companions will have to defy the social peace, which means having a disposition towards antisocial attitudes.

These isolated rebels will grow stronger creating ties with other rebels who live in other neighborhoods, other towns, or other cities. Thus they can multiply their strength, exchange ideas, avoid isolation, protect themselves from repression, in sum: create a small tribe or nomadic commune that moves across a mute and sterile social terrain. **Yet by seizing the strategy necessary for survival, they place an obstacle in their path, which many struggles have never managed to surpass.** Knowing only the relations of affinity, they become incapable of breaking with the isolation created by the mediatic State and by the conservative customs of society itself.

In a city with many companions, a tendency forms, among others, to substitute intra-neighborhood networks

with extra-neighborhood networks only among people from *the scene*.

To create relationships in the neighborhood, that is, natural instead of arbitrary ones,<sup>[9]</sup> it is necessary to behave in a surprisingly old-fashioned way, talking with neighbors about family and the weather, baking them cakes, inviting them over to eat, taking care of their kids, asking their help to fix the refrigerator or move a mattress. And above all this attitude cannot come from a pragmatic

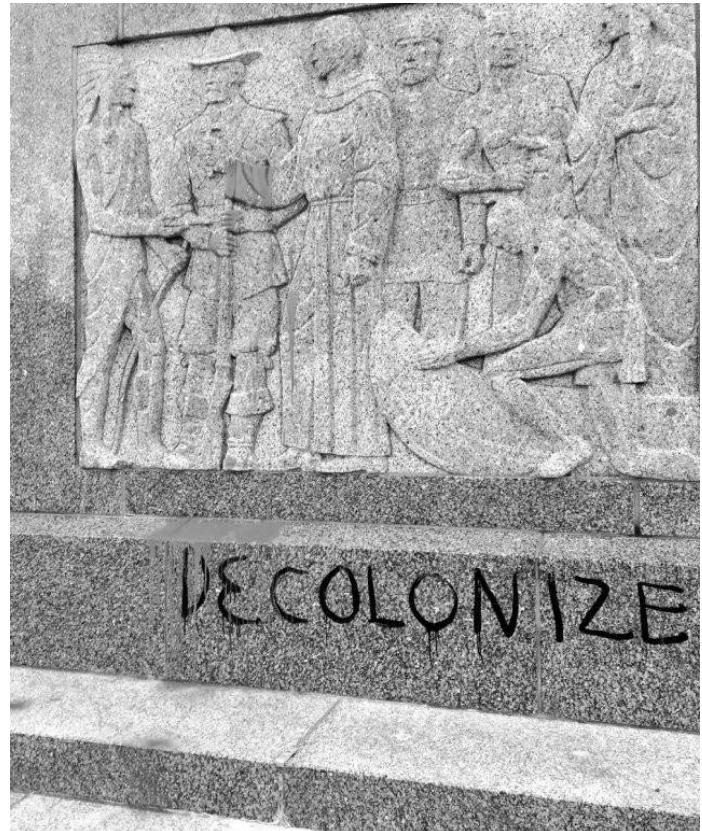
calculation designed to create a network between anarchists and normies, to “build the neighborhood,” rather it must arise because you sincerely miss the lost commune. This is “appearing in the lives of the others”.

Someone who is not motivated to get to know their neighbors, which is to say a more antisocial person, is not capable of creating an intra-neighborhood network. But they are capable of doing something equally important: fomenting the struggle and the combative, antisocial spaces that attract all the other freaks, isolated ones, losers, and solitaires who always constitute the struggle in ages when the State is strong enough to fake a lack of real problems.

### Society in Rupture

And when the bold and isolated have achieved the exhumation of the social peace – or if this is achieved by spontaneous events – and the others begin to take to the streets and question the dominant order, which is to say, when there is a social rupture or at least an affective rupture with normality, what do those who have already spent a long time rebelling do?

They will be much better positioned if they have already worked towards resolving the tension between their social and antisocial attitudes, if they have already begun to appear in the lives of the others and learned how to act in heterogeneous spaces; but also if they already have a strong practice of attack to supply the new



Minneapolis, U.S.A.; colonial monument symbolically blood-splattered and tagged

struggle with weapons adequate for sabotaging order.

It is normal that in the season of the rupture, more rebels will approach social positions, seeking complicity outside of the traditional affinities. In this way they can play the important role of finding confluence between the different conflicts, eroding the single-issue alienation with which mediatic democracy disciplines legal movements. And within this new conflictivity born in the collectivization of all the complaints that before were monopolized by progressives, within this new totality of antagonisms, the companions disposed to put themselves alongside the others will be able to carry out a critical participation and spread anarchist visions and tactics. But if they trick themselves and fall into populism – which is to say, forget who they are, forget their heritage of thousands of years of struggle, in order to accept the democratic prejudices that will make it easier for them to communicate with people still immersed in normality – they will betray the struggle and betray themselves.

In the moment of populism and possibilism, the antisocials have the vital role of keeping alive the idealism that the companions who are forgetting the goal of the struggle have lost; of provoking; of making impossible any pact with normality; of continuing to attack and destroy; of going farther and ridiculing any self-interested pragmatism.

Often the ruptures don't last long or spread<sup>[10]</sup>. Anarchist interventions can sabotage the recuperators who attempt to neutralize them; they can bring more fuel to the fire by transmitting experiences of self-organization and attack. In the moment of rupture, those who remain in their antisocial position cannot respond with agility, and those who reject their old antisocial position will disappoint themselves when the situation calms down again, if they do not betray it first. Both attitudes are necessary to confront the true question.

## Who Are We?

All the terms they have given us to answer this question are inadequate. We need to reconstrue the web of signifiers itself, the grammar that operates invisibly between the proffered elements. As [Michel] Foucault points out in *Les Mots et les Choses*, in the classical age (the 17th century), the sign stops being a worldly form and loses its affinity and organic relation with the signified. Previously, there was a fundamental grammar that rested on a magical vision of the world based on sympathies and symmetries that served to justify the established order. We can imagine – and there are archaeological traces – an even older fundamental grammar resting on a magical order in which the power of transformation was within everyone's reach, in contrast to the Renaissance [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg54], when the world, although magical, was an already written text and the only magic consisted in discovering it.

The new rationalism facilitated an aggressive change in the established order, another step away from the world and towards alienation. Language became an arbitrary species, something to be analyzed outside of its terrestrial context. The knowledge of the new science achieved its ideal form in the chart, the encyclopedia, the zoo: a neutral space, objective and even invisible in which to expound a series of units ordered in accordance with a logic that hides the violence that uprooted them from their organic relation with the world [ed. – see *A Green Anarchist Critique of Science*]. And if in recent years the sciences have begun to show an interest in spontaneous orders, in the network of relations and interactions between things, it is not because they have begun to see the world, but because they have fully taken the machine apart, scrutinized its elements to the umpteenth degree and now are beginning to put it back together again and get it running so that everything functions according to their commands. It is no longer a question of capturing some or many elements from the world and using them as tools for the good of the economy, but of reconstituting the world as a great machine [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg73].

"The insurrection is the meeting of society at the barricades assembled from the smashed remains of everything that isolates us. For me it is a vital concept in the anarchist vision of revolution, and it is something that we must prepare the ground for and fertilize at every moment, even and especially when it seems like the wrong moment. Just as the anarchists of Spain would never have been able to resist Franco's coup [ed. – see *Who Is It?*] and create space for a revolution if the *pistoleros* [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg80] had not irresponsibly embarked on a course of armed struggle a decade earlier, I think the anarchists in Greece facilitated a social insurrection when they wed their uncompromising and illegal approaches with recognition of the importance of communicating with society, in the years before December 2008 [ed. – see *The Exarchia Communes Rises & Defends Itself*]. The ability to be antisocial allowed them to adopt a course Greek society was not ready for, and the need to be social brought them back to the people who would eventually rise up, because the insurrection is a function of society and not of a political movement, as important as those movements may be in the development of necessary social characteristics. The anarchist participation in those movements, because it was both critical and enthusiastic, won a greater visibility for anarchists and their ideas. Simultaneously, the fact that the anarchists had never succeeded in consolidating as a single movement seems to have helped them immensely to diversify and spread and include a greater portion of society [ed. – see *'Combative Solidarity'*]. And in December, the lack of a single program and the diversity of strategies made the task of police repression impossible. What the rebellion in Greece shows, as do the rebellions in Kabylia, Oaxaca, and China, is that although insurrection becomes second nature to everyone and vanguards can only get in the way, the insurrection does not spontaneously provide the people with what they need in order to go from insurrection to revolution. We still have to find the answers to certain questions, and those of us who never go back to normality, those of us who keep dreaming of freedom, need to suggest and deploy these answers when the moment comes. Once we've burned everything, how do we reveal and attack the *social relationships* that underpin capitalism and the State? What structures and infrastructure can we target that will weaken the counterinsurgency without putting society in a passive disaster mode, waiting to be rescued? How do we help other people believe in another world they would be willing to fight for, and to spread visions of stateless, communal societies that begin now? [...] Spontaneity is a crucial element without which the insurrection would not exist, but spontaneity is not a God that will deliver us from Egypt if we walk through this desert for long enough. The anarchists, doing what they always do, miss strategic opportunities that previously had never been possible. The apolitical people, exercising secret desires, will have their spirits crushed when a temporary return of order prevents them from being the selves they only just discovered, and with the help of this demoralization the temporary return of order will win the appearance of being permanent. But order is never permanent. Although we may never achieve the world we want, the very dynamics of control and rebellion ensure that we will never lose and the State will never win. Either we will destroy it, or we will continue fighting against it and troubling its pathological dreams forever. Nature itself is chaotic, making total control impossible. We may not have ultimate defeats and they may not have ultimate victories, but there are steps forward and steps backward."

– *What Greece Means (To Me) For Anarchism*

Together with this change, human beings have ceased to be a perfect reflection of a divine order in the world and they have been converted into, on the one hand, beings that have nothing to do with the world because they have surpassed it<sup>[11]</sup>, and on the other hand, biological machines made of the same raw material as the entire dead and mute universe.

The prior Christian order was based on categories of identity that were transparent and simple, as useful for the rebels as for the authorities. Everything was based on the dichotomy between good and bad (believers and infidels) or in one's position within the social hierarchies. The first class of each category was very easy to turn

around. In the rebellions against feudal order and incipient capitalism, rebels seized the torch of the believers, they signaled the authorities as the evil ones and it was in the name of God that they burned priests, disemboweled counts, and proclaimed the free commune, "the world turned upside down". Regarding the second class, the hierarchies of the age also delimited the lines of war; it would not be possible to be part of the aristocracy or the church – which would mean owning the lands of others and directly involving oneself in administering their oppression – and also rebel against that system.<sup>[12]</sup> In fact, it was the new bourgeoisie – who had no defined place in the old classifications

but could only be understood as belonging to the ranks of the oppressed given their lack of noble blood or position in the Church – who diverted the struggles that almost destroyed Authority and directed them towards the formation of the current system.

In contrast, **all the categories within which we understand ourselves today serve to hide the fracture lines of the social conflict**. None of them contain all of those who must struggle, on one side, and all that we must destroy, on the other. *Citizen/foreigner*; obviously not.

*Man/woman*; neither [ed. – see **Return Fire** vol.3 pg35], unless the ones from SCUM<sup>[13]</sup> are right, a possibility I would not be biologically capable of ascertaining nor asserting. *Human/animal*; on the most morbid days, it would seem to be valid, but who will administer the revolutionary genocide if not ourselves? Such a question reveals the incapacity of this category to illuminate a criterion for liberation.

*People/government*; first democracy and then fascism have obscured this distinction to the point of converting it into a mere demagogic trick. *Worker/owner*; it excludes the invisible ones who still resist the logic of production and it obviates the fact that the work that animates workers will always dominate them, even if they organize it themselves [ed. – see **Return Fire** vol.1 pg59]. Besides, many owners work and many workers receive such privileges that they act more like owners. *Rich/poor*; but just until recently, the European masses thought they were rich.

Currently, there are no categories that help us understand our history, our relation with the system and our desire for liberation. The closest to this last criterion would be an ideological category, an “ism”. But it is not our adherence to a doctrine that defines our relation with the system, our common history, and the rebel desires we express to a greater or lesser degree! The category of “anarchist,” perhaps the most pure, does not approach the “good” of yesteryear because tying the moral value to the ideology creates a moralism and a possibility of vanguardism incompatible with anarchy; what’s more, the majority of people who create and who will create anarchy are not anarchists.

Beyond the given categories, one finds an entire process of uprooting that invades all the spheres of existence. They have done so much to make us forget who we are, to leave no word nor memory that might illuminate a pure being that existed before all their processes of colonization and that can still communicate with us through all the thick mists of history! We can only imagine when the mistake began.

**As we have noted, in the continent of its birth capitalism did not replace a**

**libertarian utopia, but another complex of hierarchies with fewer possibilities for control.** There are many people on other continents who can claim a free commune that was crushed by capitalism – a *before* to reconstruct – but those of European descent<sup>[14]</sup> (or Asian in the great majority of cases<sup>[15]</sup>) cannot. In the European case, capitalism arose from a civilization divided into a series of feudal territories and cities with distinct balances of power between authorities and people, all loosely united by the Catholic hierarchy. The latter was a collective attempt by a decentralized network of elites to safeguard the fragments of the dream of domination of the fallen Roman Empire [ed. – see **Return Fire** vol.4 pg76], which itself was a logical evolution of the democratic Roman Republic, which was a bold project of warlike brotherhoods of Italic tribes, a society with very little family hierarchy (perhaps less than any other society in the world that has ended up creating a State), a very free society according to the patriarchal-occidental concept of freedom<sup>[16]</sup>. Why did they favor warfare and minimize feminine spaces within the *civitas*? Why did they unburden themselves of wide and defined family relations (the clan, segmentary lineage) but without creating another concept of the collective, moving instead towards an atomization and privatization of the earth and tolerating a weak aristocracy that evolved in parallel with the brotherhoods? We could ask similar questions of the Germanic tribes that conquered Rome but quickly assumed its dream, already having much in common. But in no case will there be a definitive answer.

**Nor can we give the easy answer that “we are human beings and human beings are like this,” because in the same history we find the silenced role of the Slavic and Celtic tribes who for the most part did not seek to erect a State in the Roman style as the Germanic tribes did; rather many of them resisted the empires of the day and also resisted the Church<sup>[17]</sup>.** In 983, when the Slavic inhabitants of the place where we now find Berlin rebelled against the Germanic nobles that had installed themselves atop them, like parasites<sup>[18]</sup>, they killed or kicked out the priests and nobles and afterwards lived in peace: horizontal, pagan, and free. Two centuries later, in the year 1147, the Church had to declare a Crusade against them to reconquer them and subject them to authority.



A warrior of the Pictish Celts (of what's now Scotland) who repelled the Roman expansion; Celts are known more for their legacy in Wales, on Eire, and in Brittany than on Mann, in Galicia and in Asturias

Though there is not a final answer to the question, “Who are we?”, we can approach the truth by *better understanding what they have stolen from us* in order to convert us into the lost beings we currently are. As such, we should arrive at a better understanding of capitalism. Contrary to the official history, which is believed by many anticapitalists, capitalism did not arise from “mercantilism” in the 18th to 19th centuries. We gain nothing by understanding capitalism in this way, dividing history into symmetrical phases just because. On a global level, there was a great change whose defining features appeared and achieved hegemony between the 15th and 17th centuries. It was a heavy blow, the invention of a new social motor of power that would impel all the subsequent changes in the forms of social control. We inhabit a completely different reality if we understand the current system as one that flowed or evolved naturally out of the prior one, and not as something that was violently imposed in accordance with specific strategies during a particularly agitated age of social war.

If Adam Smith [ed. – *Scottish philosopher and author of 'The Wealth of Nations', the first modern work of economics and the foundation of free market theory*] identified capitalism as something distinct from mercantilism, it is because he was constructing the ideology of capitalism, which needed to hide its roots in the war against the communes in the colonies and in Europe, and portray its creation as a free contract between isolated individuals in an already existing commoditized terrain, as though it were something natural.

It was between the 15th and 17th centuries that banks appeared and extended their power. It was then that money ceased to be a symbol of exchange – a token

commissioned by a king to authorize and quantify commerce in order to appropriate a share, as it had been since its invention by the first states [ed. – see **'Rejoin the Circle'**] – and began to be the principal form of production in itself, the parthenogenetic creation of value, debt, and

speculation. As such it was then that speculation and price inflation began, first with food, creating a new mechanism of blackmail. It was then that the institution of wage labor as we currently understand it appeared, something inseparable from the forcible theft of self-sufficiency, a process that also began in the same epoch with the installment of the old Roman laws that privatized communal land and with the beginning of enclosures [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg55] carried out to appropriate such land. This was also the beginning of the criminalization of poverty and an unprecedented intensification of the role and techniques of the governing structures in regulating and disciplining daily life and reproduction. At the same time, within the same process of the formation of the new State, colonialism was impelled, something qualitatively distinct from the antique forms of imperialism and within which slavery was linked to wage labor, enabling its mercantilization (slaves produced above all goods for the consumption of the new workers, thus subsidizing their cheap labor). They did the same thing with the new feminine labor [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg8].

In the face of all this, the changes of the Industrial Revolution and the end of mercantilism are more a question of degree and new techniques, just as neoliberalism constitutes a change that arose from the very same capitalist bases.

It is necessary to understand that capitalism did not arise as an evolution of an earlier homologous system. It is necessary because we should understand biopower<sup>[19]</sup> as a type of power that is completely new and innovative and that supplies the State with previously unimaginable capacities; because we should understand the strategic role of the State and how close we came once to destroying it; because we should understand the true bases and principles of capitalism unencumbered by free market ideology.

There is now nothing beneath these bases. Reality itself has been transformed and what was lost was the world, the interconnectivity of beings, and with it, the knowledge of who we are. We could aspire to be the “creative nothing” of Stirner [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg92], the “species beings” of Marx [ed. – see *New Technologies, Extraterrestrial Exploitation & the Future of Capitalism*], or the “future primitives” of Zerzan [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg92]. But for now, those are proposals and not realities nor the memory of another reality.



**The matter of knowing who we are demands the creation of a new “we,” a “we” that positions itself by way of the negation of a “they,” an enemy.**

**And this enemy is the rationalist, democratic, and civilized way of seeing the world. We cannot use their ethical guidelines. We cannot position ourselves within their legality. We are not their citizens, we are not the inhabitants of a country that has simply been occupied, as though capitalism were just a bad neighbor and not the basis for our existence. As such, championing “independence” does not suit us<sup>[20]</sup>. The idea of self-defense carries with it the possibility for coexistence. Better would be the certainty that our existence spells their destruction.**

[W]e are our loss, we are everything they have stolen from us. Only this can signal to us what we might be in a free world. Only this brings us together with all the beings dominated and colonized by Capital, without using a false populism to constrain those who are already at war. All of us who are living beings – who are not machines, bureaucrats, police, or voluntary slaves – have something in common: they have stolen the world from us, the commune, the clean air, the forest, the stars, the celebrations of equinox and solstice, the day and the night free from the chains of hours and minutes [ed. – see *Memory as a Weapon; The Tyranny of the Clock*], freedom of action, the running of our bodies and lives and memories. If we define “we” as our loss, we join with the others, with those who do not struggle yet, without letting them disuade our actions by being a passive majority. If we identify ourselves with our loss, we break with the categoric isolation imposed on all those who defy the roots of the system, and we signal a path of struggle away from dialogue and towards the recovery of all we have been deprived off[...]

### **Not Horizontal, But Circular**

We need to develop a consciousness of who we are, an identity that constitutes a circular motion. For every escape from the prison society [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg7], we need to undertake an infiltration to smuggle in more metaphorical weapons, carry out ideological sabotage, and then

flee with more people. **The new experiences of self-organization, the new attempts to create the commune, must return to the dominated terrain to infiltrate in the imaginary of the people who remain totally colonized.** Each rural project must maintain links with the city. Each anarchist idealism must contaminate itself in the cloudy waters of the social movements. Our future is just as much the contamination as the reclaimed soil. We will only finally be born in full when the monuments of State and Capital lie in ruins. Meanwhile, we cannot be more than the negation of their system, the fragments of a suppressed memory, the frustrated yet tenacious desire for freedom.

Yet knowing that their system is alien to us, we will know that we mustn't fight like good citizens, but like barbarians, bandits, gangs, *antisistema*<sup>[21]</sup>. We do not have leaders nor authorities nor followers; what we have are companions, including trees, lovers, children, friends, neighbors, earth, all the beings that comprise the web in which we live. A right cannot be eaten, a law does not allow you to breathe, a boss does not clean the house with you. All of those who guarantee the illusory mode of life of the citizen are worthless.

[...] In the city and in the country, we have to recreate a bond with the earth and proclaim the new communes. But we cannot repeat the mistake of confusing a commune with a milieu that hides its lack of material-affective relations behind a façade of politico-aesthetic relations. **Each time we create a commune, we also have to flee from it**, in order to take it everywhere, to infiltrate ourselves into the daily life of the others, to choose *open imperfection* over *closed perfection*, to include the obedient and timid in our subversion.

Given that the people who are not currently struggling will not become impassioned by our commune, the latter will always remain half-finished, incomplete, abandoned. This is good. We cannot let ourselves be enclosed. As such, we do not aim for self-sufficiency, as this is a lie as long as the State exists. It is better to only achieve a partial self-sufficiency because the important thing is not to tie ourselves down with the illusion that we have left the system behind, but to recover the knowledge and abilities that late capitalism

has stolen from us. Today, operating an invention as complex as a metro train is as easy as operating an elevator. Through industrialization and then automation, capitalism has robbed us of the knowledge we once had to feed ourselves, educate ourselves, heal ourselves, provide ourselves with home and clothing, take care of ourselves, transport ourselves. That knowledge was our direct connection to the world when it still existed. We need to recover it in order to recover the world.

[...] What we want is to recover our lives in a struggle that breaks with their civilization. In the city we will squat vacant lots for gardens and in the countryside we will cultivate, not to achieve full food sovereignty now, but to recover the ability to feed ourselves, once it is actually possible, and above all to influence the reality of the others. We will learn self-guided medicine and crafts to facilitate our lives in struggle and to serve as an open invitation to everyone else: *desert life in the market already, in the commune we take good care of ourselves!* But these projects of self-organization cannot serve as the first step in a process that will replace capitalism, as the partisans of degrowth<sup>[22]</sup> believe. Capitalism will never permit itself to be replaced because it is not a blind or unconscious structure. It has already devoured whole societies that offered idyllic examples of how to live in a cooperative way. Capitalism must be destroyed.

[P]eople do not remain obedient for lack of examples of freedom, because they believe logically that no other life is possible. They believe because they are afraid to defy the system that dominates them but also keeps them alive. The logic, the reasons, are all justifications.

The State is an addiction and a cautious bet. The difference between an example and the imaginary is that an example of anarchy tries to convince, based on the supposition that people live according to their ideals and their own choices, which is not the case. The imaginary is a tool. People surrender because they are dependent on the system. Animating an anarchist imaginary returns to people a tool that is vital for the self-organization of life.

## **But the imaginary does not feed off of perfect examples of utopia that prove the possibility of another life. The imaginary feeds off of questions and contradictions, not complete answers.**

[W]ith the discourse of progress and the identity of the “civilized,” [anarchy] was

separated from “us” and forcibly liquidated. No more perfect examples of anarchy are needed. What we need are imperfect examples that interrupt the social peace, visibilize conflicts and awaken people’s imaginary. They will be more useful if they are *imperfect and near than perfect and far away*, already separated by an ideological enclosure that signals them as an element of an alien reality.

Identifying ourselves with our loss, we always move far away from capitalist normality and towards utopia, but at the same time we return to those who stay within normality, because they also comprise a part of our loss. [...] The antisocial tension is this: a balance between loving people for what they could be and sometimes are; and hating them for the indignity they swallow, the heights they refuse to reach.

### **Dissidents of Utopia**

But the antisocial tension is not a mere double line that has its strategic function in the current situation. It is a contradiction one feels in their guts. It is the curse of solitude and the rejection of any limit. The antisocial or individualist concept of liberty is so extreme that it cannot be programmatic; it is not practical. But it is exactly such an impractical contradiction that we need in order to avoid the monstrosities of rationalism! **The rationalist revolutionary is the most frightful horror history has ever seen: having overturned the entire world, he [sic] has the possibility to order all the contradictions of nature and put in practice the dictatorship of abstractions<sup>[23]</sup>.**

[...] An antisocial tension will exist in any future. Many anarchists fight because we are very sensitive to the imposition of norms. Born in an antiauthoritarian utopia, we would still see much hypocrisy and imposition. Above all we reject the idea of a utopia in which rebellion is outdated and unnecessary. We don't believe in a rebellion that will abolish the need to rebel, to transgress. Knowing that the only perfection is chaos<sup>[24]</sup>, we will be unable to create a new authority[...]

### **Militants or Warriors?**

Nonetheless, we do not struggle to facilitate the struggle for anyone else. We struggle for our own freedom and to avenge our dead. We are not the militants of an organization or movement that will install the utopia. We struggle to aid others only insofar as they form a part of ourselves.

In certain aspects, or in the case of certain individuals if they are more egoist, we fight for our unique desires, to learn and to grow; in other aspects we fight for the community that sustains our lives and joys,

the community that exists as a memory and as a hope, that contradicts capitalist alienation even though it does not exist in our daily lives due to its continuous decimation<sup>[25]</sup>.

The pacification achieved by democracy often directs us towards a fetishization of violence. And although pacifism is an irremediable weakness [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg16*], aggressive attitudes can assume an exaggerated importance in our circles.

It is less important to be militant than to know who we are. The workers movement in France, for example, is very militant. They claim the use of sabotage and take their bosses hostage. But they fight to defend or achieve the dignity of being Frenchmen [ed. – and elements have been known to repress those fighting differently; see *Clarification on the Attack on the CGT Headquarters & on the Topic of 'Anonymous Disassociation'*]. In general they have accepted the national idea, their particular social contract, and there the State is stronger than in other European countries, except those where the people accept the national idea and are also conciliatory instead of militant (e.g. the Netherlands or Germany). Aggressivity within labor struggles does not threaten the power of the State because it occurs on a stage that forms part of the national idea.

Building up in ourselves a great capacity for violence, at least we recover the possibility to struggle, but we exclude those people who by nature are not combative. **The disgraceful truth is that many of the historical strategic debates in libertarian circles have been nothing but the distinct socio-emotional needs clamoring for their prioritization within a struggle that obliges us all to choose one and renounce the others.** People whose blood boils opt for insurrectionalism; the patient ones who place importance on the opinions of others choose syndicalism; impatient and creative people find their solution in individualism; and those who want to quickly solve the problems that people suffer seek their path through a certain activism. But strategies cannot be a question of character. It shouldn't be like this.

There are severe and serious critiques that must be made of syndicalism's concept of production, Iberian insurrectionalism's idea of informality or Italian insurrectionalism's antirepressive practice, the leftism of activism, and so on. But each of these practices has turned into the refuge of a certain type of person, in a milieu where they can satisfy the emotional need that impelled them to struggle, be it the need to find affinity, to communicate with more people surpassing the barriers of normality and isolation, to attack power and destroy

"Many anarchists seem blind to the real spirit of Authority, and they cling to central values of Western civilization, like monotheism, objectivity, the right of intervention. There are many different kinds of people, people with different needs, so it follows that there should be many anarchist strategies. But we

Western anarchists too often see differing strategies as evidence that one side is right and the other is wrong. We make a dichotomy or a crusade where there should be a tension or a balance. We may not believe in one God, but we still believe in one Truth, and we also think we have the right of the missionary to impose this truth on other people. I think this is a reason that nearly all anarchists are white. The tradition is Eurocentric, and we don't listen enough to other people, don't allow other people to adopt anarchism to their needs without denouncing them."

– Void Network interview with Peter Gelderloos

a deceitful peace, to ease the suffering of others. Given that each of these practices scorns the character of the others, each must also defend itself from the criticisms no matter how unreasonable they become.

*Any strategy that does not embrace human heterogeneity is destined to fail.*

On the one hand, as the first weeds, those of us who fight, now and always, are different from those who only begin to fight during a rupture. On the other hand, there is no sense in constructing our struggle in a way that excludes those who do not have the heart of a militant. Anarchosyndicalism and insurrectionalism both have committed the error of underestimating all that is not militancy, whether that is the militancy of the revolutionary organization or the militancy that sustains an informal continuity of acts of negation of the existent.

[...] The important thing is to find a rhythm we can sustain and thus not become the very ones to destroy us. Among us, there have always been the more beautiful companions – the more sensitive, anxious, or brave – who transform their lives into roses of fire, who will burn themselves in order to set all the lies alight, who will explode in bomb blasts in order to sound the furious beating of our heart: *here we are, still and always.*

But it is we who will guard their beauty, those of us who receive their gift. We shouldn't continue building a martyrology that teaches the hasty path, the suicidal path, as the only one

of value. We are going far. If we attack from a place of anxiety and impatience [*ed. – see 'At the Root of My Survival'*], out of desperation, we will lose our strength when we do not produce immediate results, when the inevitable repression falls.

[...] The truth is we are fascinated by the image of being a few against the State. We have assumed our isolation, our antagonism with society, to the point of maintaining it. We adore a Ravachol<sup>[26]</sup> more than a Louise Michel<sup>[27]</sup> because we identify more with him who declared war on society and fought with a few affines, than with her who moved among barricades, assemblies, and neighborhoods, who did not only fire from bulwarks but also cured people or moved them to action.

The State has moods. It can go through conciliatory and arrogant phases. It does

not always act in its best interest. The mode of attack of a Ravachol demands a strong response from the State, because such a mode questions and ridicules the State's strength. Even if it is in a conciliatory mood, it will have to quickly respond with repression to preserve the illusion of its monopoly on force.

Arrogance always provokes an arrogant response. But we

cannot lie: the attacks of all the Ravachols of history fill us with joy and hope. The word "arrogance" stems from ancient Greek and refers to the

combative posture of a warrior who attacks one who is more powerful. We need arrogance to inspire us, to remind us that even though we are alone, it is always possible to attack and we are braver than the miserable cowards who work as thugs for the State.

But arrogance, if it is the only mood we are capable of, hides those elements necessary to survive repression. We also must be sensitive, humble, cautious, and attentive to the State's changes of mood and its probable reactions to our attacks. [...] It would be better if those of us who cannot live in their false peace because of the anxieties that push us to struggle tirelessly were, instead of militants, warriors: the warriors of a community that does not yet exist, but a community that also includes people with the heart of a healer, mother, artist, grower, builder, storyteller, and even the people who reject community itself, who question it and leave it in order to seek out the heights and depths Novatore spoke of [*ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg89*], those who seek to form Stirner's union of egos [*ed. – see Symbiogenetic Desire*]. A community of all living beings, of all the people who have refused or might one day refuse to be machines and slaves. All the others, those who prefer to be functionaries, will die, either because they attempt to imprison and kill us, or because they will never learn to feed themselves without capitalism, because they believe food comes from the supermarket.

In this path, the most important thing is not one or another attitude of struggle, but the memory and the projection of who we are.

[...] The insurrection cannot feed itself in that sterile terrain that suffers a lack of imaginaries. We can burn everything that constitutes an obvious aggression against our lives – police stations, banks, government offices, and perhaps, if we are very smart, the television station – but we will hold back before the task of transforming that which maintains our survival in an abusive and manipulative way: the food industry, work, closed and single-family dwellings, transportation, institutional education and healthcare; that is to say, the gears of the capitalist system.

[...] The path towards rebel magic can only be pointed out. It consists of discovering our bodies, exploring the mysteries of the world, the interconnectivity between the existent, the fact that *we are our relations* – that we are much more than ourselves,



"WE HAVE MAINTAINED A SILENCE CLOSELY RESEMBLING STUPIDITY": anarchist Niel Robert's graffiti near his 1982 suicide bombing of the much-protested Police Computer Centre in Wanganui, Aotearoa, then considered a groundbreaking development in surveillance; currently, CCTV sensors in Wellington analyse behavioural movement and even detect graffiti paint fumes, while New Zealand police monitoring culminated in a major 'anti-terror' operation against indigenous militants and their anarchist accomplices in 2007

that we live for thousands of years, that history and future mix, that in our own brains memory and imagination are linked, that the earth itself is alive [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg39**]. It consists of abandoning the philosophy of exchange and value in favor of a philosophy of mutuality and gift [ed. – see **'Anarchist Relations in Practice'**], of recognizing that we do not live through a measured exploitation of resources that surround us; instead we live thanks to the gifts of other beings that also form a part of ourselves, that we should honor with gifts of our own.

It consists of recognizing that we can achieve what we believe impossible, that ten people with enough enthusiasm and bravery can easily realize an attack that a hundred people doubting themselves could never do, that a person who is crazy enough can set five trained riot cops running. **But the craziness that permits us this power is not a calculated bet but a surrendering of oneself to the world, a knowledge that dying is nothing more than returning to the earth.** The crazy rebel is the one who understands herself [*sic!*] as just another element, but instead of being fire or water or air she is the passion for freedom and she will do what her nature demands of her. One such as this cannot be stopped, not even by killing her, because she is not an individual but a spirit that travels from body to body, visiting even the most timid if they know how to open themselves to the world.



[...] When an old lady marches in a protest and imagines the street free of cars and full of gardens; when a young boy lights fire to a shopping center that he and his friends have filled with gas cans and imagines a forest growing out of the ruins; when a mother entertains the fantasy of conducting her own birthing with friends in a free community where her daughter will never know of prison, of marriage, of advertising that assaults her self-esteem, of pollution, of institutional education; when all those worlds flourish parallel to our own, we will be stronger than ever.

[...] We are the bomb in the heart of the machine that wants to grind us up.



“Human regeneration can only emerge from cultural regeneration. (By ‘cultural’ I mean not the system of commodified mediations that currently pass under this term, but freely chosen actions and interactions characterised by spontaneous creativity). The attempt to prompt human regeneration in the absence of cultural regeneration can all too easily result in totalitarianism. Human and cultural regeneration are dialectically interrelated, but the latter provides the all-important context within which the former can succeed. Fredy

Perlman, [talking of indigenous resistance to civilisation]: “The resistance is not primarily a clash of arms [...] The resistance is in the drums, not in the spears; it is in the music, in the rhythms lived by communities whose myths and ways continue to nurture and sustain them...”

This passage raises the question of the relationship between drums and spears, culture and armed resistance. but we are not in the position of these indigenes: civilisation has deprived us of those things that Perlman sees as the heart of resistance. We have no free communities of individuals, no life-sustaining myths and ways, no substantive community. So we cannot resist in the same way. [...] So what options are left? Clearly, for us, there must be a closer, more informed relationship between the drums and the spears, even if the latter are subordinate to the former. But to forego the spears would be madness. The spears must have their place – but their place remains rooted in the world of the drums. And if the drums no longer sound, then we must beat them.

And if we have no drums, we must build them. And if we’ve forgotten how to play them, we must remember or learn again. And if we can’t renew our continuity with the past, then we must make a virtue of our discontinuity and make it all anew.”

– Beyond the Fragments

1. transl. – “Compañeros” is usually translated as “comrades”, though “camaradas” also exists in Spanish. We have decided to use the literal translation, “companions”, to avoid the partisan connotations of “comrade”, and to convey the intimate connotations of “compañeros”, even though these are more pronounced, perhaps uncomfortably so, in English. Perhaps the alternative sticks; we consider it worth a try.

2. ed. – An early kind of grenade which explodes on impact; used in Felice Orsini’s attempted 1858 assassination of French Emperor Napoleon III, then commonly by anarchists in the remaining 19th century in Europe.

3. transl. – In 1893 the anarchist Santiago Salvador carried out an attentat [assassination] in the posh Liceu Theater on Las Ramblas, Barcelona, killing some twenty members of high society. [ed. – To vindicate his companion Paulino Pallás Latorre, a Catalonian-Argentinian anarchist whose attentat of a general during a military parade sadly only killed the horse. Coincidentally, the bombs were thrown into the audience during the play “William Tell” which is the same play that the Emperor Napoleon III and his wife were on their way to during the attempt on their life by Orsini over 35 years earlier.]

4. Respectively, a poor neighborhood and a rich neighborhood of Barcelona.

5. transl. – Those who tried to locate power in the dozens of commissions and subcommissions that formed as part of the putrid experiment in direct democracy during the 15M movement. [ed. – The Spanish anti-austerity movement starting on March 15th 2011 which became known as the “indignados”. From ‘From 15M to Podemos’: “Before the 15M movement started, Barcelona had already witnessed a one-day general strike with majority participation, in which anticapitalist discourses were frequent if not predominant, and which resulted in large scale occupations, rioting, looting, and clashes with police, constituting an important step in the reappropriation of street tactics that would make other victories possible in the following years. A combative May Day protest had abandoned the typical route through the city center to snake through several rich neighborhoods, sowing destruction and a small measure of economic revenge. The 15M movement broke out just two weeks later, and its official discourses called for total pacifism and symbolic citizen protests to achieve a better, healthier democracy through constitutional reform. Almost no mention was made, within this official discourse, of the conditions of daily life, of collective self-defense against austerity and the direct self-organization of our survival. But where did this official discourse come from, and how was it produced in such a huge, heterogeneous crowd? 15M wasn’t huge from the beginning. In fact, the first assembly in Barcelona, the first night on Plaça Catalunya, there were just a hundred people present. Some of these were adherents of “Real Democracy Now,” a new group based in Madrid that had produced the original call-out for the countrywide protests and occupations. Their discourse was extremely reformist and made no mention of the growing waves of real protest and social conflict that had been growing in Spain, building off a tradition of struggle that contained a great deal of collective knowledge. This history was absent from their perspective, which was perhaps the only way they could feasibly call for a movement based on pacifism and legal reform. They did mention the “Arab Spring” [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg87**], above all the uprising in Egypt, but only in the most condescending, manipulative way. They described it as a nonviolent movement, and they portrayed it as

having already won its objectives, when, as is clear now and was clear then for anyone with a radical perspective, the struggle had only begun. [...] Empowerment was little more than a slogan in the plaza. With even a hundred people in an assembly, not everyone can participate. Once the number of participants grew from the hundreds to the thousands, commissions and subcommissions started popping up like mushrooms after a rain. Experienced moderators began directing the assemblies, putting in practice techniques for a modified consensus process that had been developed during the anti-globalization movement. Proposals were developed and consensed on in commissions, then they had to be clearly read out to be ratified by the general assembly. A hundred people, if I recall correctly, could block a decision, and a smaller number could send it back to the commission for more debate. To truly have any meaningful influence on a decision, someone would have to spend two to four hours during the day at a commission meeting to draft the proposal, in addition to the several hours that the nighttime general assembly lasted. More difficult proposals were in commission for days or a whole week, and in any case you had to go to the commission meetings every day if you wanted to make sure that the old proposal wasn't erased by a new one. Clearly, only a small number of people with a certain level of economic independence could participate fully in these directly democratic structures. Even if everyone enjoyed economic independence, the structures themselves necessarily function as funnels, limiting and concentrating participation so that a large, heterogeneous mass can produce unified, enumerated, homogeneous decisions. In any given assembly or commission, certain styles of communication and decision-making are favored, while others are disadvantaged. Direct democracy is just representative democracy on a smaller scale. It inevitably recreates the specialization, centralization, and exclusion we associate with existing democracies. Within four days, once the crowds exceeded 5000, the experiment in direct democracy was already rife with false and manipulated consensus, silenced minorities, increasing abstention from voting, and domination by specialists and internal politicians.]

6. ed. – Reference to the tragedy of the Spanish Civil War, when 'anarchists' upheld democratic government in the name of anti-fascism: "Diego Abad de Santillan, the anarchist economist who was eager to mobilize state power to impose an anarchist economic model [succeeded], partially, in creating an anarchist dictatorship. [...] Catalan President Companys' personal notes confirm the reality on the streets: if the anarchists had only ignored the government, it would have disappeared, for it had become powerless after workers' militias defeated the fascist coup attempt. It was the CNT [ed. – see *Memory as a Weapon; The Origins of Victimization*] that resurrected the government, by accepting dialogue with Companys and then by joining the Central Committee [of Anti-Fascist Militias]" (A Critical Review of Anarchism & the City).

7. The exceptions to this are highly interesting. For example in Val di Susa [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; A Letter from Anarchist Comrade Anna Beniamino about Operation Scripta Manent & More...*], where there is generalized support for a struggle against progress. What elements make its exceptionality possible?

8. transl. – In Spanish, "coherent" is not only internal, as in the coherence of the ideas held or words uttered by a single person, but also refers to whether their ideas and actions cohere; do they walk the talk.

9. Here I use these two words literally. Arbitrary relations are those that are chosen, that is, those of affinity. Natural relations would be those of the family or neighborhood, even though nature itself is a construction [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg92*], as one can choose how to understand family or where and with whom to live.

10. ed. – "Contrary to what many have written, though an insurrection does meld all those who enter its furnace, it does not surpass identity; in fact pre-existing identities – not political beliefs or courage or material poverty – are generally what determine whether people feel called on to run into that furnace, or to look on in astonishment. For this reason, despite all the poetry and encouragements of insurrectionists, insurrections do not leap national boundaries. Those who considered themselves French did not join the immigrant insurgents of the banlieue [suburban estate ghettos], excepting a small number acting out a conscious political project (some of whom were mugged by the insurgents, and others of whom were accepted). In the Greek insurrection, people who thought of themselves as living beings in struggle against authority saw the protagonists as one melded group; people who saw themselves as Greeks saw them as students, anarchists, and immigrants acting separately. The insurrections that jumped state borders from Tunisia to Syria [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg87*] filled precisely that vessel that gave its name to the revolt, the Arab world. The nation, understood separately from the nationalist projects of European states, is simply the largest imaginary community a person can envision based on their history and their ability to communicate with the world around them. An insurrection, it should be obvious, occurs within the imaginary community of its participants. Knowledge of rebellion, particularly its images, among the population of a neighboring country will destabilize the political authority that seeks to manage them, but that population will not rise up without an independent spark. The eros effect does not surpass local realities or strong identities. We could speak here in terms of frictions of distance. The insurrection is as fluid and unrestrained as a great wave, but it does not break on smooth terrain. All sorts of inevitable identities and natural limits to empathy act as barrier reefs or sea dikes to slow or stop the wave. On the one hand, immigration and globalized information create empathic links that subvert these barriers; on the other hand, nationalism, citizenship, and the media mobilize to neutralize the subversions. Radicals and organizers must counteract these measures by proliferating a culture of internationalism and solidarity and promoting decentralized and self-organized media that can spread images and news of revolt across the planet in the face of the selective censorship now in place, in which images of violence are almost strictly associated with insecurity, and rarely with popular challenges to authority."

11. The vision of human surpassal of the world is a logical evolution of the vision of the human reflection of the divine, while the materialization of the earth and all the things in it constitutes a rupture with the prior vision of a spirit or animus that unites and lives in everything, although Christians prepared for that rupture by insisting that only humans have souls.

12. The many conflicts between layers of the elite, such as priests, bishops, knights, and kings that characterized the Middle Ages constituted attempts to shift the balance of power but not the way power was understood and reproduced.

13. transl. – Valerie Solanas' "Society for Cutting Up Men," a manifesto popular among Barcelona feminists in recent years. [ed. – The notorious text

is actually remarkably lucid in describing the actual inversion of popular stereotypes of the (hetero-) sexist mind (i.e. women = needy and weak, men = strong and independent); what we found as equally disturbing about it as the rampant essentialism is the proto-transhumanist desire for a single-sexed breeding program, as if capitalism's reproductive technologies have not always been a tool of the patriarchal-scientific establishment – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg26*.]

14. ed. – At least one exception to the historically-successful colonisation of Europeans living indigenous life-ways would be the nomadic Sámi people of Sámpí (northern Scandinavia). They have been seriously undermined by the establishment of national borders (Norway, Finland and Sweden) and historical farming settlements creeping north, and by forced Christianisation, boarding schools and sterilizations, with the usual attendant suicide crisis among the young of a culture undergoing destruction. After Swedish eugenics claimed to prove the 'inferiority' of the 'Laplanders', the modern Swedish state now want to claim that Sámi is not an ethnicity at all so they can complete their genocide, while still using images of the culture for the tourism industry in a country whose world-famous social democracy was and is built from the proceeds of the mining industry (see *Return Fire vol.2 pg41*) devastating Sámpí (among other projects). On top of industrial forestry, hydro-electric dams, military test ranges and wind parks, like all Arctic indigenous peoples the Sámi are already feeling the effects of industrial society's global warming.

15. ed. – Again, with some exceptions; see *Fraud, Fantasy & Fiction in Environmental Writing/The Invention of the Tribe*Q.

16. ed. – At his Anti-University event in London this summer, Peter Gelderloos refers this tradition first to Athenian democracy; which "had – and this was very important to their society – certain visions of freedom and equality. And I say 'certain' visions because the caveat is in this case the most important part; this was a very patriarchal vision of freedom and equality. It was equality between men; freedom of citizens. So this gave this sort of warrior class of men the ability to conquer, to take slaves, although that took some time to develop... So within the society itself there had to be this equality among men. [This new democratic state] proved to be in both commercial terms and military terms an extremely effective model for state power, because it could ensure that you could get a much larger percentage of the population actively serving as state agents (supporting what was in the end an imperial project, and a project of dominance, of conquest) much more effectively than these really top-heavy, hierarchies based on competing family lineages and based on unassailable privilege and many other factors that weren't present in this new Greek model of the state. So this obviously has very important ramifications for today, if we understand democracy [as the emergence] of a much more powerful, much more militaristic model of the state; one that was more effective at creating commercial empires. [...] The Romans were extremely patriarchal; and this is another society (like the Greek city states) formed by warrior brotherhoods which had ideas of formal equality (internally) and had ideas of the necessity of decision through assembly, that then became a very effective empire."

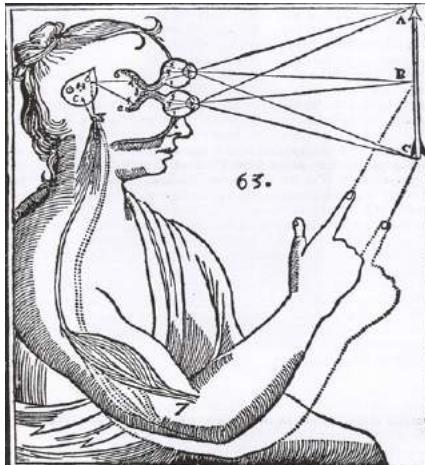
17. ed. – "A destructive mode of being is somehow inflicted at an early age on every child in the Western world. One wants to call it Hebrew or Greek or Christian with Lynne White, but judging from the wreckage of the interiors of China and India, the Buddhists and Hindus offer no helpful

alternative. [...] The poisoned ontology-ontogeny carried into Europe by Mediterranean cultures [ed. – see **Return Fire** vol.3 pg87] between the fall of Rome and the Reformation [ed. – see **Return Fire** vol.4 pg54] was diluted and resisted by the pagans and heathens who were, ostensibly, converted. The desert mind from the Mediterranean rim, a Platonic [ed. – assertion of Greek philosopher Plato that the 'Real' in ideal form lives outside of our possible experience], prophetic, self-centering, dualistic, schizoid, eco-alienating way of being, could not have been less like the Celtic way that it eventually quashed and absorbed. As Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro has remarked, it is astonishing that a hemisphere of people in the north could believe that their whole existence hinged on things that happened to a small, distant, desert-fringe people two millennia ago. [...] The Protestants might be regarded as hard-liners who could see that the northern pagans were doing to Christianity, the compromises that the Church was making to gain a lease, the whole infiltration into the orthodox religion as described by [Jean] Seznec in *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*. Like the Indians of North America centuries later, who went underground with their religion as the American [ed. – and Canadian, British, Spanish, French...] government sought systematically to destroy their culture, the Britons, Finns, Hungarians, and Germans retained their "superstitions" in private and brought them masked to church. The prelates, in what they thought was a strategy of assimilation, kept the polytheistic holidays, but their success was their own perversion" (Paul Shepard).

18. This is how many States in Europe and Asia began throughout history; influenced by the example of another civilization, a group that we currently understand as an ethnicity [ed. – see **Fraud, Fantasy & Fiction in Environmental Writing/The Invention of the Tribe**'] formed as a religious-belligerent institution, conquering a neighboring society and installing itself on top to colonize it and convert it into the base of their new State.

19. ed. – "[T]he practice of nation-states and their regulation of their subjects through "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations." The science of Biopower, by extension, is known as biopolitics. [Michel] Foucault elaborates: "By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the 18th century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. This is what I have called biopower." Biopolitics is thus more simply a science of controlling and managing populations of people using the knowledge of their biological needs and impulses. The focus here is the manipulation of our sensual experience of everyday life, the effective recuperation of an entire species from their era and displaced into an increasingly technocentric and inverted society. One example would be the transition from fascist control to democratic control. Implementing the tools of voting, representation, and state-funded aid to further pacify citizens and implement them within the process of control. Labor unions and other progressive reforms in modern mass society could even be within the interests of power, creating a more passive population, blurring the lines of responsibility for the traumas inflicted by the culture as a whole. The population then feels invested in the flow of capital, even identifying with the their productivity. The

idea that a job is not something one does simply to survive, but that one is encouraged to pursue a job that blends leisure with labor, therefore paid hours and unpaid hours are all spent toward the same ends, is another aspect of Biopower. This is, of course, a controversial idea. To imply that today's social democracy is a refinement of yesterday's national fascism would be a tragic and impossible truth for many. Subjectification is the process through which individuals and groups of people are molded and lured into accepted roles and identities by dominating mechanisms and disciplinary technologies as permitted and assimilable by Empire. [...] Today we experience constant subjectification and re-subjectification: In the store I am the shopper, at home, the consumer, or in the kitchen, the cook. Identities such as male and female, gay and straight, hipster, musician, or entrepreneur are all identities as subjects. At the protest, we are collectively channeled into the role of the activist, or even terrorist. In this sense, Empire has successfully and constantly absorbed, or assimilated, dissident elements of society by channeling them into a group that can be either demonized or democratized into the system, thereby eliminating subversive activity. The act of turning individuals into subjects, more generally, is to make them digestible to Empire; they then are circulated between apparatuses as needed by capital as a means toward generalized control. There is a place for everyone, and no one is left out" (The Ancient Origins of Biopower, Part III: Domestication).



20. ed. – Presumably a reference to the drive for Catalan independence from the Spanish State; a matter which has of course been very topical once again of late. From elsewhere in the original text: "It is not a coincidence that in the few places where people collectively resisted the witch hunts (and the patriarchal and capitalist advances they represented [see **Return Fire** vol.1 pg6]) are the places with the strongest popular struggles in Europe of the 20th century: Euskal Herria and Eire. [transl. – And without overstepping our bounds as translator, we might also mention the popular resistance in support of heretics throughout the Middle Ages in the Balkans or the proximity of the Cathar territories [ed. – diverse Christian heretics (often with a focus on gender parity, and against taxation by the Catholic Church) against whom in the south of France a crusade was launched by the Pope in 1209, playing a role in the creation and institutionalization of both the Dominican Order and the Medieval Inquisition] to the Pyrenees, and thence to Catalonia.] Neither can it be coincidence that the [European] country that fought most fiercely for its political independence, but did not solidarize internally against the imposition of an even more intensive Christian patriarchy today enjoys an autonomy that means very little and has become extremely

capitalist: Switzerland (we should also mention Scotland, which has a similar history with the presence of Calvinism and a strong participation in the witch hunts, but which was never granted as much autonomy since it lost its wars against England). Capitalism arose as a strategy of social control implanted by the elites who would form the new State (progressive princes with bourgeois and Protestant theoreticians) but it was a renovated patriarchy that allowed it to put down roots and completely change the terrain of existence." We don't know the further thoughts of the authors on this matter, but in an interview one Barcelona anarchist further described the difficulties they were facing during the recent popular push for independence: "One thing that's really really noteworthy is... most people in the street are extremely enthusiastic about it so any criticism of the referendum process will be very difficult to get across [...] [because things are polarized] they'll automatically associate any criticism of the referendum process with a position in favour of the Spanish State, in favour of the historical oppression of Catalan culture and language (I mean it was largely prohibited during the fascist regime; these things are important). If anarchists in the past had never been sympathetic to certain aspects of national liberation (aspects which I think should be important to anarchists [ed. – see **We Can Be Worse Still**]); obviously not any inter-class kind of alliance, obviously not any support for creating a new state, but support for self-organisation of human communities – which also includes linguistic and cultural elements), if none of us had been supporting those struggles in any way in the past, then if all of a sudden we just appear in the streets now when there's a possible rupture then people will very easily see us as just opportunists, with actually nothing to say. In the past few years there's been some anarchist presence [in Catalan liberationist spaces] but definitely not that much, and in part that's also because of the Left (I mean, the Left has been interested more in hegemonic politics and not in entering any real debates, not in receiving criticisms), so overall the independence Left has been really vital in creating the sort of segregation or separation between views which has made it harder to be critical participants in some kind of movement around that. And now we're definitely facing those limitations. And anarchists have been in the streets, without a doubt, but it's just like this overwhelming mass psychology is really hard to deal with and also really really dangerous; I mean if they win independence due to an act of popular disobedience and popular participation, then they'll create a state which is much stronger than the Spanish State, which is suffering a huge crisis of democracy; now you'll have a state in which (at least in the beginning) there is no crisis of democracy, there's a great deal of loyalty, and there's a reduced list of who the public enemy is, there would be a greater ability of the state to repress those public enemies, repress anarchists for example... So if there's fighting in the streets and people see anarchists fighting in the streets, going up against the police, going up against the military if that's an issue [ed. – all of whom's leave was cancelled at the time, though not reported upon], then we'll win more camaraderie, more solidarity, and it might be more difficult for the new state afterwards to repress us, but yeah, it's a difficult situation. [...] It's a situation where it's really hard to defend an anti-authoritarian concept of independence and self-determination without defending [an] authoritarian and ultimately nationalist concept of political independence." Another recent text 'About Catalonia' also stressed the historic legacy of cross-class nationalist alliances: "In a civilized southern Europe, which has been hierarchized for more than two thousand years, which has known the notorious influence of

the Roman Empire [then] the Catholic Church or various Maghrebian civilizations, Catalonia emerged as an important power from the Middle Ages onwards. The First Catalan State was born in 1162, with the unification of several counties previously under the control of local lords. Its court then adopted Catalan as the official language. Later, the region was integrated into the Kingdom of Spain, retaining certain institutional privileges, the *fueros*, negotiated by its elites for themselves, and not for the beautiful eyes of the miserable, the exploitation of whom they lived off, not without some conspicuous luxury on the part of Lerida, Girona, & co.. This is what we are referring to when we speak of a Catalan nation. It is from this mythical past that the Catalans of today derive their origins. Some "libertarians" fantasize about an ancient autonomy, which obviously does not include those subjects who expressed their anger. There has in fact never been any popular autonomy in the history of Catalonia, if we were to judge the result – the achievements of an opposition to its elites, any more than there's been anything similar in neighboring Provence or Occitania [ed. – on the 'French' side of the Pyrenees]. Everywhere, the historical struggles of the peasants or craftsmen have been confronted with the various fractions of power: those of the monarchy, the Church or the commercial and merchant nobility, which have never ceased to claim and negotiate local privileges as against the central power, against their loyalty towards it. [...] Language, like social organization, is largely derived from the hierarchical relationships of societies in "our" region of the world. There are, of course, certain peculiarities, social practices which may oppose certain forms of power, or power itself, which are especially forged in struggles. But this part of southern Europe is not a region of "peoples" who have preserved a way of life and "autonomous" logic vis-a-vis the external power, as existed in regions of the world where populations of tribal people lived who had not known civilization. It is a territory whose borders have moved, a region of cathedrals and castles, the land of crusades against the Cathars, the City of the Popes, the Inquisition and trade, of colonization. [...] And if among the famous Catalan conquistadores, there are certainly not as many Catalans as Basques, history still recalls sympathetic characters such as Joan Orpi i del Pou, last conqueror of Venezuela, Gaspar de Portolá in Mexico, etc."

21. transl. – "Antisistema" is the word the Spanish press assigned to extralegal political and cultural rebels, principally so as not to visibilize anarchists by mentioning them. It carries with it the odor of dangerous, uncivilized radicals.

22. transl. – "Decrecimiento" refers to an anti-revolutionary and anti-capitalist movement that seeks to slow and then reverse economic growth as a non-conflictive way to transform capitalism. This current could contain anyone from ATTAC [ed. – reformist and anti-combative alter-globalisation group; see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg17] to permaculturists.

23. ed. – "As influenced by rationalistic doctrines as [philosopher Jean-Jacques] Rousseau himself had been, French revolutionaries [of 1789] tried to apply social reason to the human environment in the same way that natural reason, or science, was starting to be applied to the natural environment. Rousseau had worked at his desk; he had tried to establish social justice on paper, by entrusting human affairs to an entity that embodied the general will. The revolutionaries agitated to establish social justice not only on paper, but in the midst of mobilized and armed human beings, many of them enraged, most of them poor. Rousseau's abstract entity took the concrete form

of a Committee of Public Safety (or Public Health), a police organization that considered itself the embodiment of the general will. The virtuous committee members conscientiously applied the findings of reason to human affairs. They considered themselves the nation's surgeons. They carved their personal obsessions into society by means of the state's razor blade. The application of science to the environment took the form of systematic terror. The instrument of Reason and Justice was the guillotine. The Terror decapitated the former rulers and then turned on the revolutionaries. Fear stimulated a reaction that swept away the Terror as well as the Justice. The mobilized energy of bloodthirsty patriots was sent abroad, to impose enlightenment on foreigners by force, to expand the nation into an empire" (The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism).

24. ed. – Again, from 'From 15M to Podemos': "Even during the general assemblies, the chaotic margins could not be extinguished. Many thousands of people boycotted the votes. Some of us refused on principle, as anarchists, to legitimate such farcical exercises of authority in the name of the people, a collective whole that was only effaced by the artificial imposition of unity. Many others didn't vote because they found the assembly boring (much like the child in the classroom who daydreams, not because she [sic] is unintelligent, but because she is, in fact, more intelligent, because she is not engaged by the authoritarian, pacifying method of education). Others because, once the crowds had surpassed fifty thousand, they couldn't get close enough to hear. The margins of the plaza became an unruly country of whispered conversations, criticisms, and occasional heckling. Weren't all these other spaces also decision-making spaces? Don't we make decisions in every moment of our lives? Why is the formalized, masculine space of an assembly more legitimate than the common kitchen, where many decisions and conversations also take place? Why is it more legitimate than the hundred clusters of small conversations and debates that take place during the day, on a small scale, allowing people to express themselves more intimately and more fully? Even if we participate in every formal decision, are these the same decisions we would arrive at in spaces of comfort, spaces of life rather than of politics? Is it possible that our formal selves become a mere representation, a manipulation produced during a few boring hours of meetings that is used to control us during all the other moments of our lives? [...] Again and again in the plaza, we saw a correlation between democracy and the paranoia of control: the need for all decisions and initiatives to pass through a central point, the need to make the chaotic activity of a multitudinous occupation legible from a single vantage point – the control room, as it were. This is a statist impulse. The need to impose legibility on a social situation – and social situations are always chaotic – is shared by the democracy activist, who wishes to impose a brilliant new organizational structure; the tax collector, who needs all economic activity to be visible so it can be reappropriated; and the policeman, who desires a panopticon in order to control and punish. [...] Calling the 15M movement imperfect doesn't cut it. All the oppressive dynamics, all the habits of passivity and authoritarianism in our society followed us into the plaza. But there, in that collective space, we had the opportunity to confront them. The structures of direct democracy only masked or exacerbated those dynamics; they were feeble

attempts to control the underlying chaos. Even some anarchists failed to see this. Like many others, they got distracted by the aura of officiality – the titles and processes, commissions, schedules, and diagrams. All that was a farce. The imposition of an official framework was intended to redirect our attention just the same as it sought to control our participation. Next time, hopefully, we will know not to take it seriously."

25. ed. – Some (though clearly not all) who use the term egoist would consider the two inseparable; see *Symbiogenetic Desire*.

26. ed. – As the Dutch-French anarchist François Claudius Koenigstein was better known, sent to the guillotine in 1892 for a string of bombings including that of the living quarters of the executive of the Public Ministry and the councilor who had presided over the Assises Court during the trial of three imprisoned and tortured anarchists.

27. ed. – "Louise Michel, terror of the bourgeoisie. The bastard child of a twilight aristocrat and a poor servant woman, she grew up in poverty and became a schoolteacher in Paris in the 1860s. She first published a book on education for the developmentally impaired titled, "No more idiots, no more madmen"; colleagues recalled her as a compassionate and radically innovative teacher. Converted to anarchism by another woman who had run a sort of neighborhood Food Not Bombs during the Prussian siege [of wartime Paris], she became one of the fiercest militants of the Paris Commune. Beforehand, she had participated in the Vigilance Committees in Montmartre, which arranged mutual aid for the poor and planned protests against the emperor and later the new republican government. She would first attend the Women's Vigilance Committee, then often would head over to the meeting of the Men's Committee, dressed in male military attire. In early 1871, the new Republican government attempted to disarm the French people to secure its own position. In March, concerned about the rebellious workers who refused to hand over the cannons they used to defend the city against the Prussians, the Republican army marched into Montmartre. Louise Michel is staying at the house of the radicals who are holding on to the cannons. The house is surrounded by soldiers; many are arrested, some killed. The soldiers pay no attention to a woman, who, posing as a nurse, slips out, and then sounds the alarm call, rousing the vigilance committee to the defense of the cannons. A workers militia confronts the soldiers, while old women put their bodies in front of the cannons and contemptuously refuse to be moved. The generals demand that the soldiers fire on the crowd. The soldiers refuse. By the end of the day, the generals are dead and the entire city is rising in revolt. The Paris Commune has begun. On the barricades, Louise Michel fights tirelessly, helping lead the people's defense against the invading army and refusing to surrender. When the city falls and she is finally captured and put on trial, she makes one of the most defiant courtroom statements in history, concluding: "Since it seems that every heart that beats for freedom has no right to anything but a



The banner reads; "NEITHER SLAVES NOR PRISONERS NOR REINTEGRATED Free & Rebellious"

little slug of lead, I demand my share. If you let me live, I shall never cease to cry for vengeance... If you are not cowards, kill me." The court were indeed cowards. Despite having reputedly killed numerous policemen and soldiers, Michel wasn't executed, but instead deported to the South Pacific penal colony of New Caledonia. During her time there, a revolt broke out among the indigenous population; unlike many transported Communards, who side with their captors against the so-called "savages," she supported the rebels, reportedly showing them how to cut telegraph lines to gain an advantage against the French. Pardoned after seven years in exile, she returned to France, greeted by a crowd of thousands upon her arrival. Ever wondered why anarchists to this day carry the black flag? It was Louise Michel, who in 1882 demanded that anarchists march with it rather than the customary red flag to distinguish ourselves from the followers of turncoats like Marx [ed. – see *New Technologies, Extraterrestrial Exploitation & the Future of Capitalism*], who condemned the Commune from his armchair. She would spend 30 more years touring, speaking, leading riots, organizing radical schools, giving away nearly everything she owned, and agitating for liberation. [ed. – Aged 47, she was also sentenced to 6 years prison and 10 years police supervision following an 1883 demonstration which she headed as it looted

multiple Paris bakeries. Confronted by a would-be arresting officer, her young companion Jean Pouget jumped in while Michel hijacked a carriage and initially escaped. Pouget was caught with a loaded revolver on him (which she claimed on trial was hers), and a search of his lodgings found "three files sharpened like daggers, a copying press, six hundred copies of a sixteen-page pamphlet entitled 'To the Army' [distributed seditiously amongst soldiers in Amiens, Bordeaux, Marseilles, Vienna, Rouen, Rheims, and Troyes], a large number of Anarchistic journals and pamphlets, and some incendiary and explosive instruments". Pouget got 8 years.] On a trip to Algeria, where she was attempting to spark a rebellion against the French colonial government, she fell ill, and died in Marseilles in 1905; thousands rallied to the funeral of the defiant woman who never married, never stopped fighting, and became the anti-heroine of the French nation" (The Ex-Worker #26).

"I think a lot about how our politics (therefore/ that is, our lives) must have room for emotions: for expressions of all kinds of emotions, not just (righteous or otherwise) anger. And I think about how hard it finds that. What do I talk about? What do I try to avoid? Which feelings do I try to pretend aren't there or don't matter? Those times my neck aches from holding my tongue set firm in my jaw, locked with the weight of everything I don't say. But of course I want what I can't have. It's not an ideological test I fail. We all want what we can't have. If what we wanted as simple, realistic, we'd never talk of revolution. We wouldn't talk of anarchy if we could easily shape our desires to fit this world. Those people I have been closest to have almost always been people with whom I have shared an identity that came about because of what we call politics, or ways of living that grow around certain directions of thought. And maybe I could just have other hobbies. There are other forms of intense moments people share. But there's something precise & special about the common pursuit of the impossible. Then, all you have is each other. [...] This is it: in hegemonic anglo masculinity, is anger the only strong emotion men are allowed to express openly, with passion? The same can be said of anarchist politics: except in our case, it's for everyone. [I]f our texts speak only of anger, we're not fully human."

– *Taking Things Too Far*

## TRYING FOR SPRINGS

"More faults are committed while we are trying to oblige than while we are giving offense." – Tacitus

As people who reject the status quo, we are all critics. But most of us have learned how to critique badly, and so we either are, or are perceived to be, judgmental, dogmatic, sloppy, and ideological, as opposed to helpful, contextual and interesting.

Anarchist culture, to the extent that [ed. – at least in certain parts of the West] it operates on middle class white (protestant) values, is a culture of interpersonal niceness, with a mythology that tells us that people respond better to support and that support always looks like calm voices and careful communication, that good intent on everyone's part is not only essential but is always apparent. (If we are paying attention, we can all remember times when people have said sadistic things to us in a calm voice, and other times when people have hurt us needlessly from good intentions.) Sometimes none of the above is true, frequently it doesn't need to be true, and in fact we are hampered by the assumption that it is true. **Not only that, but support and care look different coming from different people.** Especially in a culture that has mixing of diverse peoples, it is inappropriate to expect that nice, support, or care, will (or should) always look the same. The homogenization of what support is supposed to look like increases as more and more people rely on and learn from therapists – people trained in formal institutions to interact with their clients in specific ways (ways that are considered neutral, but that reflect and promote values from a specific culture). And many times this increasingly narrow range of options means that our bottom line is departure, that is, the conflict resolution tactic that we fall back on more and more is the abandonment of the conflict, be it embodied in person, place, or situation.

**This tendency towards abandonment seems to increase how often and desperately people cling to the rhetoric of community. Community comes to be misunderstood as a place where everyone likes each other, where everyone agrees with each other; it could be better understood as a place where people appreciate what they like about each other and live with what they don't like, where there is enough of a buffer of size and variety to allow that and where, even if and when people leave, they don't disappear.**

If we broaden our range of conflict options, what do we have?

Talking to people more, and more creatively, about our problems, and being engaged in other people's problems more and better than we are now. Being around long enough to see things through, and (if we travel) of coming back frequently enough, and for long enough, to maintain connections and information about significant events. Becoming tougher people, who challenge each other emotionally as well as ideologically and ethically, who ask each other (and ourselves) hard questions including "how do we live with insoluble discrepancies?" (**The point of these hard conversations is to increase our ability to meet each other's needs in real life situations, from violence to arrest to drug use to raising children to dying.**)

What kind of support do we need to learn in order to become tougher (that is, able and willing to keep fighting for what we want when things are difficult)? Obviously there is not one answer for this. Just as obviously, we are all traumatized by this culture, and to the extent that we are explicitly and consciously outside of the mainstream, we get stepped on and beaten up. So being gentle with ourselves and each other is appropriate. But not always appropriate. The more monolithic the concept of support comes to be, the more proud or comfortable the role of victim, and the less likely we are to recognize our full range of option for acting in the world.

An appropriate toughness includes being able to avoid getting wrapped up in questions of intention. (Intention is too often brought up as a way to manipulate and deflect.) **The ability to get something useful out of someone's critique does not depend on how well-intentioned the critic is.** How many stories have we heard of people who were told they couldn't do something and were motivated to succeed by *that resistance*? How many times are we told that "we can succeed" by people who care nothing for us and merely want to sell us something?

Anarchists have chosen to be against most things in this culture, have chosen to fight on most possible fronts. As part of that fight, we take on our deepest assumptions about what we are taught, about appropriate relationships to other people and the rest of the world. This requires being tough in a way that nice society doesn't teach us or support. How do we learn to be tough in the ways that we need to be?

How well we are who we want to be is an issue of luck, which we can't do anything about, and of will, which we can.

"A good critic is the sorcerer who makes some hidden spring gash forth unexpectedly under our feet."

– Francois Mauriac

# WHAT COULD COMPENSATE FOR THE LOSS OF THE NIGHT SKY?

It is at best hubris and at worst obscene to think that we can even answer the question; to think that we could even crudely predict the consequences of such a monumental change in our lived experience. But in reality there is no prediction to be made because most humans now live in cities where the night sky has been blotted out. We do not need to predict the consequences rather we need to determine what we have lost. **It is a relatively new experience for humanity to be living without stars and consequences are only now coming to light.**

The New York Times Magazine recently featured a slide show of images by photographer Thierry Cohen that show cityscapes and the (normally absent) starry sky. Cohen's project is titled "Darkened Cities" and it re-inserts what has been lost so that we can better know and feel what has been taken from us. The sky in Cohen's photographs is brilliant and it is not a product of his imagination, it is the genuine sky of the world we live in, he has just photographed it in places where it remains visible and inserted into a cityscape where it is generally hidden from view.

The project highlights the fact that we are born into a denuded landscape (skyscape?) and so often only notice the loss that happens during our relatively short lives. We don't frequently question the desecration that occurred prior to our own individual existence. But obviously we suffer from decisions made prior to our birth just as our decisions today will either benefit or harm those who follow us. That we are not always aware of the harm that has been done does not lessen – in fact it may amplify – our loss. At some point – or more accurately, at a great number of points – a decision, or more accurately a long series of decisions, was made that stars are not important to our well being. That we can blot out the night sky without suffering...or at least not suffering in a way that couldn't be offset by some perceived benefit. **But what benefit could be sufficient?** And how can such a decision be made and imposed on the whole community of life?

In a 2004 article in *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, Travis Longcore and Catherine Rich distinguished between "astronomical light pollution" and "ecological light pollution". The former is

light pollution that obscures our view of the night sky; the latter is light pollution that disrupts the normal light-dark patterns that are part of the ecosystems that animals – human and nonhuman – have evolved in concert with.

The human health effects are significant and are still being documented.

In 2012, the American Medical Association issued a report on the health effects of light pollution stating: *"The natural 24-hour cycle of light and dark helps maintain precise alignment of circadian biological rhythms, the general activation of the central nervous system and various*

*biological and cellular processes, and entrainment of melatonin release from the pineal gland. Pervasive use of nighttime lighting disrupts these endogenous*

*processes and creates potentially harmful health effects and/or hazardous situations with varying degrees of harm...Even low intensity nighttime light has the capability of suppressing melatonin release. In various laboratory models of cancer, melatonin serves as a circulating anticancer signal and suppresses tumor growth. Limited epidemiological studies support the hypothesis that nighttime lighting and/or repetitive disruption of circadian rhythms increases cancer risk; most attention in this arena has been devoted to breast cancer."*

Ecological Consequences of Artificial Night Lighting – a volume edited by Longcore and Rich – catalogs the deleterious effects on animals. Many animals are disoriented, attracted or repelled to artificial lighting. Migratory birds are drawn off course and crash into illuminated buildings. Nocturnal foragers are faced with what is effectively a "perpetual full moon" and consequently may have reduced time to obtain needed calories or else face greater exposure to predators. Predator-prey relationships and reproductive patterns can be disrupted. Wildlife corridors may be effectively blocked. Below is a short list of more specific findings from the recent scientific literature:

– Artificial Night Lighting and Sea Turtles (2003) Sea turtle hatchlings exposed to lights may fail to find the sea after emerging. *"What happens is documented on the beach surface by their flipperprints...Instead of tracks leading directly to the sea, turtles leave evidence that they crawled for hours on circuitous paths ('disorientation'), or on direct paths away from the ocean and toward lighting ('misorientation')."*

– Apparent Effects of Light Pollution on Singing Behavior of American Robins (2006) *"Proliferation of artificial nocturnal light may be strongly affecting singing behavior of American Robins at a population level."*

– The Effect of Light Intensity on Sockeye Salmon Fry Migratory Behavior and Predation by Cottids in the Cedar River, Washington (2004) *"increased light intensity appears to slow or stop out-migration of fry, making them more vulnerable to capture by predators such as cottids"*

– Studying the Ecological Impacts of Light Pollution on Wildlife: Amphibians as Models (2007) *"Results...demonstrate that artificial night lighting has the potential to affect foraging and breeding as well as growth and development of frogs and salamanders...artificial night lighting should be considered an additional factor that negatively impacts amphibian populations"*

– Street Lighting Changes the Composition of Invertebrate Communities (2012) *"invertebrate community composition is affected by proximity to street lighting independently of the time of day. Five major invertebrate groups contributed to compositional differences, resulting in an increase in the number of predatory and scavenging individuals in brightly lit communities. Our results indicate that street lighting changes the environment at higher levels of biological organization than previously recognized, raising the potential that it can alter the structure and function of ecosystems."*



– Does Night Lighting Harm Trees (2002) Artificial lighting “can change flowering patterns, and most importantly, promote continued growth thereby preventing trees from developing dormancy that allows them to survive the rigors of winter weather.” Additionally, disruption of flowering patterns can in turn negatively affect pollinator species.

**Even aquatic animals are not exempt from the bright lights of humanity [sic].** Fishing boats, offshore oil rigs, and research vessels project light in places and times that would otherwise be dark. In some cases, aquatic animals live and/or feed at very specific depths. A particular depth can normally be assessed by the amount of sunlight that penetrates the water. This is disrupted by artificial light thereby generating conflict and exacerbating competition.

**A 2001 article in Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society calculates that: “about one-fifth of the World population, more than two-thirds of the United States population and more than one half of the European Union population have already lost naked eye visibility of the Milky Way. Finally, about one-tenth of the World population, more than 40 per cent of the United States population and one-sixth of the European Union population no longer view the heavens with the eye adapted to night vision”.**

So in exchange for compromised human health, dead animals, damaged ecosystems, and a sky void of stars we have gained the ability to forego sleep by working graveyard shifts under fluorescent lights. If there is such thing as a birthright it must include the full use of our eyes and an unimpeded view of the night sky.

## THE POSSIBILITIES OF ELECTRICAL DISRUPTION

**06.05.15, Santiago, Chile:** Anarchists enter a substation of Chilectra provider and leave an incendiary “composed of 1.2 liters of benzene plus 400 grams of polystyrene” inside a cabin. Due to the actions of those who “take advantage of the last dark sighs of this sky”, much of the capital city is temporarily without power...

**06.10.13, Arkansas, U.S.A.:** Two power line poles severed east of Little Rock. Cops connect the act with two more within 6 weeks before; a high-voltage line felled by connecting a metal cable between a transmission tower and a train track close by in order to, according to the FBI, “utilize a moving train to bring down the tower”, and in Lonoke County a substation is burned out and left with the tag “you should have expected U.S.”

**11.06.13, Mikashevichi, Belarus:** Arson of a power booth for a granite quarry by a group of dedicated earth liberation warriors. Resulting short circuit left quarry and nearby village in total darkness. It was a strange feeling to suddenly hear silence where just a minute before there had been constant industrial noise. To see stars in the sky that had been blocked out by quarry lights just moments before.”

**16.04.13, California, U.S.A.:** An assailant (possibly two) enters manholes at the PG&E Metcalf power substation (who supply Silicon Valley), southeast of San José, and cuts fiber cables for the stations communication before more than 100 high-powered rifle rounds damage 17 transformers and three transformer banks. Cooling oil then leaks from a transformer bank, causing the transformers to overheat and shut down. State regulators urge customers in the area to conserve energy over the following days... “There are ways that a very few

number of actors with very rudimentary equipment could take down large portions of our grid,” the chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission said. “I don’t think we have the level of physical security we need.”

**April '13, Derrylin/Ballyconnell, Ireland:** Three high-voltage poles are cut down (and one for communications set ablaze) at the power station of the Quinn Group (producer of cement and concrete products, container glass, radiators and plastics); not the first time the company has been sabotaged in those lands over the years.

**21.09.12, Belgium:** Comrades of *Suie et Cendres* note that a fire “in the high tension electrical supply cabin paralysed the Indaver garbage incinerators in Lillo, the harbour zone of Antwerp. The two ovens of the cancer production plant were put on standstill for a few days.”

“If politicians speak of a blackout, they do so likely to frighten the population, to get the vote. To evoke a power shortage is making a preparation work in people's minds for the construction of, for example, a new nuclear plant. Never is the question raised of why all this energy would be needed.

Yet modern voracity of capital could perhaps be measured through its energy consumption. To give a simple example: getting rich Eurocrats and managers in 1 hour 20 minutes with a Thalys [high-speed train] from Brussels to Paris requires the equivalent electrical energy that five Brussels households on average consume in a year! [...] We must break through the lies of the state. It says we're all in the same boat, that we must all make efforts to take care of then. But it is not like that. We are on it's boat against our will, or at least, without having ever really chosen. Notorious as the galley slaves of the past, to make the insane real life machine. Because since we were born and we die in the hull, the hull of the work, obedience, consumption, our eyes were never able to scan the horizon and the sky. So if the government says it is terrorists who want to sink the ship, it's just because it wants to retain its power over the chained slaves. So it's up to you to choose between staying chained a lifetime or escape, also taking the risk of having to swim by yourself; for you to choose between submission and rebellion, between obedience and dignity.”

– *We See More Clearly in the Dark*



“If the present society looks like a big open air prison, its barbed wire would be in fibre optics and its watchtowers would be more like networks of communication. [...] These decentralized and highly complex infrastructures have made possible for new forms of exploitation (it suffices to think about the present necessity to be reachable in every moment on a cellphone, in the logic of the flexibility of work), and thus it is

there that today exploitation can be attacked. Fibre optic cables, networks of transportation... [...] infrastructures of communications as well as the cellphone networks... [...] sabotages of public illumination systems, fires to generators and electric transformers, sabotages of axes of railway transportation or of networks of public transportation. In a present analysis of the metropolis the importance of transports (of human beings, merchandise, information) would not be negligible. [...] If some cracks in normality, in the social reproduction, offer some possibilities, then it is important to have imagined them beforehand. What to do in case of an electrical shortage? What to do when the public transport doesn't function anymore and generate an incredible chaos in a city? [...] During a riot, cutting off electricity is not only a question of making it harder for the police forces to advance, but will have echoes that go well beyond any technical consideration of the moment. We don't live in the same way when it's dark. This aspect is even more vivid in relation to energy networks; where the consequences can usually go way beyond the first imagined objective.” – *From Short-Circuit to Social Blackout*

**26.02.11, Bristol, U.K.:** “[T]argets are everywhere and in direct accordance with their being, so comes our attack, a ‘smart’ cctv van was paintstripped in broad daylight, later that night internet and telecommunications cables were set on fire.”

**28.10.10, Paris, France:** *Daytime power outage at the Ministries of Economy & Budget disrupts office functioning – an internal investigation suggests “that it is a malicious act” performed by “experienced people”; “and this, the same day as there is a call out for a strike against pension reform.”*

**July '10, U.K.:** “Over the past three weeks three mobile phone antennas have been destroyed by fire in the Nottingham area. [...] These actions were simple and repeatable. The tools were old rags, flammable liquids and a lighter.” *Dedicated to “all those who are imprisoned by civilization” in struggle.*

## ON SABOTAGE & ARSON ATTACKS IN EUROPE

If silence is frightening, it is perhaps because the absence of familiar sounds tends to project us on ourselves. When we advance in the silent darkness, it is not uncommon for us to speak to ourselves, to whistle a little refrain, to think out loud so as not to find ourselves prey to the anguish. **This is not easy and may even require some exercise, as our brains have been conditioned to identify silence with danger, darkness with risk.** It is the anguish that the emptiness provokes, the feeling of being on the edge of the abyss and not being able to turn our eyes away from the abyss that opens before us. **Yet it is also at such times that one tends to be closer to oneself, without an intermediary, with a much more assertive presence of mind and emotion.**

It is difficult to find silence or darkness in the modern world. Industrial noises always accompany us, the devices emit their electronic sounds permanently, and if not, there is almost always someone to fill the void with gossip as impenetrable as superficial. **Today, the fear of the void, the anguish of silence is sublimated by permanent connectivity.** Never alone, never in silence, never before the abyss. And so, never face to face with ourselves. Calls and voices from the “inside,” the whole universe of imagination, consciousness, sensitivity, reflection, are rendered mute, ignored, flattened and replaced by the continuous bombardment of information, *E-mails, appointments, consumer warnings, reminders. Thus, the modern world is completing the inner universe of the individual.* With an annihilated interior, the human being will find themselves in ideal conditions to accept slavery, even to embrace slavery without even having the ability to understand the state in which they are in: caught in the web.

All this is certainly not new. The history of oppression did not start with the smartphone. Not so long ago, the conditioning of the human spirit was done mainly through a galaxy of camps. The factory camp, the education camp that is the school, the control camp that is the family authority and the places of worship. **Nevertheless, despite the threads woven between all these structures of domination, there was still, relatively speaking, a lot of emptiness [ed. – see *Fraud, Fantasy & Fiction in Environmental Writing/The Invention of the Tribe*/Q].** And this void fueled the revolt in the camps, and vice versa. The prisoner who is mutinous has, nevertheless, their eyes riveted on the horizon beyond the walls, it does not matter if their imagination of this horizon pleases us or not. Although the camps of all types have certainly not disappeared, the ongoing capitalist and state restructuring, notably through the increasingly widespread introduction of technology, is aimed, beyond increased exploitation and control, more totalitarian, to the elimination of all emptiness. The adage of permanent connectivity is at the heart of this deadly symphony. Connected, we are **always a bit at work, a little in family, a little in the supermarket, a little at the concert.** Connected, one is always exposed to the injunctions of power, to the summons to consume, to the eyes of the control. We are entirely at the disposal of capital, we are the slaves who wear invisible collars.

Someone said that if this society is an open-air prison, the modern cells must be these antennas and communications relays that contrast everywhere with the blue sky, and the barbed wire

the reproduction of domination, it seems to be paramount that they can look elsewhere and otherwise. **It is not that the local police station should no longer attract the attention of the enemy of authority, or that the window of the bank would not deserve to be smashed, or that the court should not receive what it deserves, but it is also true that domination has spread over the territory a vast number of relatively small and unprotected structures, of which more and more, if not almost everything, depend.** It is in these little things that the invisible web which encloses us and which allows the restructuring of capital and of the State materializes. It is there that the arteries of domination which irrigate the exploitation and oppression can be attacked; this is where technological prostheses and their enslaved chatter can be silenced.

This is what happened when a fire destroyed the technical installations and cables of France 3, on April 21st, 2017 in Vanves (Hauts-Seine), disrupting emissions. This is what happened when anonymous hands cut an Orange telephone cable in Morbihan on May 4th, fifteen minutes before the presidential debate, depriving thousands of viewers and hundreds of companies of their connectivity. This is what happened on Monte Finonchio in Trentino, Italy, when in solidarity with imprisoned anarchists, several relays and cabins for radio, television, mobile telephony and military communication were destroyed by fire on June 7th, the day after the conviction of an anarchist comrade for a bank robbery by the court of Aachen in Germany [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; Aachen Case Verdict*]. This happened on June 12th in Hamburg, where a subway station was set on fire. This is what happened a few days later when night owls burned a television transmitter and a mobile phone antenna in Piégros-la-Clastre in the Drôme on June 15th, and later stated that “*the pylons which grow everywhere are sensitive and vulnerable points because they are points of concentration of flow and because it suffices a few liters of gasoline to seriously damage them*”. And on June 23rd, it is in Vilvoorde in Belgium that a relay antenna is destroyed by a voluntary fire.

These few examples, probably far from exhaustive and all drawn from the last few weeks, show that everywhere, the snip is possible. It must also be said that, unlike the authoritarians who can only conceive of the world’s upheaval through the taking of the temples of power and the management of large masses, a sort of impossible symmetry with a much better equipped enemy, **we anarchists emphasize the agility of small groups, the capacity of the individual, the spread of hostilities rather than their centralization, inter-individual relations of reciprocity, trust and knowledge.** Such a way of organizing seems to us much more interesting to attack the ever more tentacular enemy, dependent on the interconnection between all its structures. Faced with the spread of a vast number of small transmission structures on the territory, nothing is more appropriate than a myriad of small groups, acting autonomously, able to co-ordinate with each other when this makes sense, practicing the old art of sabotage against the arteries of power. In the silence they impose on machines, in the perturbation they inflict on the “real time” of domination, we will find ourselves face to face with ourselves. And this is an unavoidable condition for a practice of freedom.

optic fibers and electrical cables. Indeed, for those who dream of stopping

# 'REJOIN THE CIRCLE'

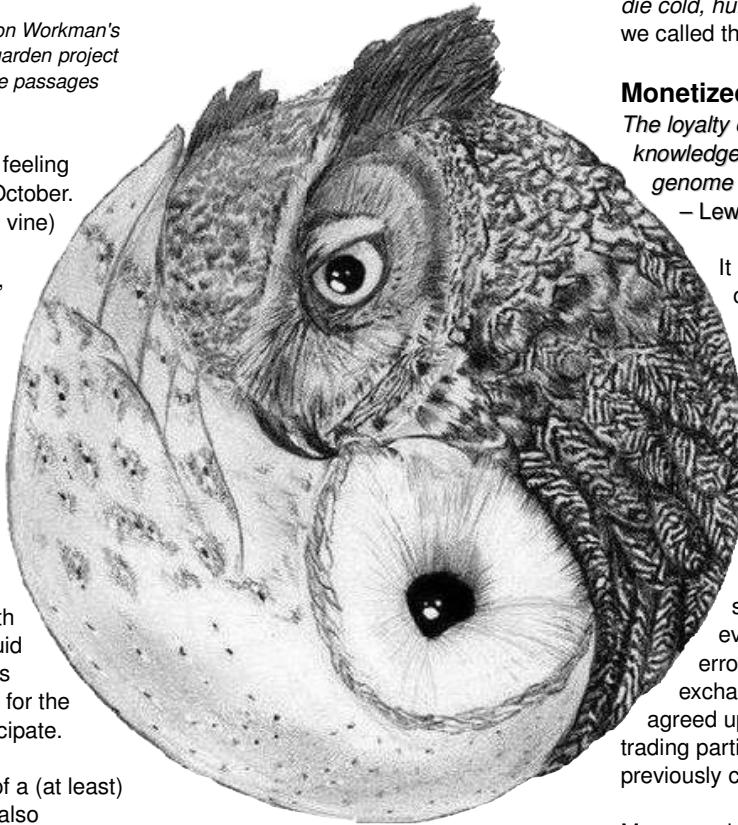
[ed. – Written during the author Dion Workman's time living at the Shikigami forest garden project in Japan, as a two-part essay these passages are extracted from.]

This past week I have been feeling deep gratitude for the gifts of October. The delicious *Akebi* (chocolate vine) fruits that have appeared everywhere amongst the trees, the walnuts and chestnuts littering the ground, the first of the winterberries, little raspberry like fruits peeping out from under a carpet of deep green foliage, the *Inubiwa* (wild fig) fruits, persimmons, salads of tender chickweed, dandelion, plantain, sorrel and pomegranate, the warm sun on my face, the cool moist earth under my feet. Receiving a squid from Tsuchiya-san I give thanks also for the gifts of community, for the gift economy in which we participate.

Via Tsuchiya-san we are part of a (at least) three-way gift economy which also includes a local fisherman whom we are yet to meet. Passing on our surplus to Tsuchiya-san, and often things we have made with our surpluses, we receive the surplus not only from Tsuchiya-san's garden and kitchen but also the surplus catch of her fisherman friend. I don't know if our gifts ever make it directly to this particular fisherman but they will certainly make it out to Tsuchiya-san's circle of friends and family as there is simply too much for her to consume on her own. In the words of a Pirahā hunter-gatherer "*I store meat in the belly of my brother.*" [...] And here we must understand "brothers and sisters" in the widest possible sense: **all creatures, all plants, Earth itself, are our kin, or, more precisely, are us.**

The gift economy is, of course, not limited to goods. With Tsuchiya-san we also participate in another ancient form of the gift economy, a form absolutely fundamental to the development of culture, *the defining characteristic of culture*: the intergenerational passing down of knowledge borne of experience.

[...] Such exchanges, so essential, are now largely absent not only from rural communities that have experienced a mass exodus of young people but throughout our entire culture (in the cities of our most "affluent" societies there seems to have been a mass exodus of old people, shunted off to retirement and nursing homes, hospitals, or self-exiled somewhere). Our relationships have been



monetized, as "services." The guidance of our elders has been replaced with educational institutions, life coaching, counselling, therapy, the physical contributions of our young ones replaced by labourers, hired help, contractors etc. As our economic system, with its insatiable need for growth, converts every natural resource *[sic]* into money, taking them away from us so they can be sold back to us, so too are our relationships slowly but surely being replaced by services for which we must pay. [Charles Eisenstein]

To break the psychological tyranny of our deeply engrained fear for tomorrow is no easy task. **Increasingly our belief that scarcity is the ground state of Earth is being actualized.** Our (agri)culture has made it so. The shift from hunting and gathering to agriculture has altered the environment from one that abounded in an astounding diversity of wild plant and animal foods to a homogenous landscape of agricultural crops that we must sow and tend today in order to harvest tomorrow. And thus begins the process of deferment that has come to dominate our culture (exemplified in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religions but present throughout all agricultural peoples), a process of rewards for work done where nature no longer gives freely but must be coaxed into giving, where we must toil to "make our living," where paradise will come later, always later. Our monetizing of everything, every natural resource converted into a "good" and every relationship converted into a

"service" realizes this belief in scarcity, making mere existence a cause for anxiety: *Get to work! if you don't want to die cold, hungry and alone.* In other times we called this slavery[...]

## Monetized Life

*The loyalty of school children, indigenous knowledge, drinking water, the human genome – it's all for sale.*

– Lewis Hyde, *The Gift*

It is commonly believed that the origins of money lie in barter. Money, we are told, developed as a technology to facilitate the otherwise cumbersome direct exchange of goods. As anthropologist David Graeber, in his book *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, points out (as have many others) there is virtually no anthropological evidence to support this view and plenty of evidence suggesting that it is erroneous. Barter, the direct exchange of goods based on an agreed upon value of the goods by the trading parties, is found where people have previously come into contact with money.

Money and barter are systems where the emphasis, the value, is placed on the object of exchange, that is, on the material goods or services. The purpose of the exchange is acquisition. **In traditional gift economies, such as potlatch, for example, we see something very different. Objects that help meet material needs are indeed transferred but the value does not reside solely in the object but, rather, in the giving and receiving.** The purpose is not acquisition of material goods but the strengthening of support networks or gift circles.

What does it mean to strive for "financial independence"? That we don't want to be dependent on others, to *need* others. We want to be free of obligation and responsibility. If you do something for me and I pay you for the service I have met my obligations and therefore owe you nothing. Job done, money paid, we're finished. "Nice and clean."

This hard won "independence" is illusory, of course, for we have actually exchanged *interdependence*, with family, friends and community for near total dependence on money and the goods and services it can afford us. We are no longer intimate with the people who sustain our lives. The monetized life is a depersonalized life.

## The Gift Circle

The dynamic of the gift is very different. The gift builds relationship. The feelings of gratitude we experience in receiving gifts

foster our desire to give back, to share our gratitude. And, on the flip side of gratitude we have obligation. We feel a sense of responsibility to those who are generous toward us. We look out for them and care for them. The gift attends to our self-interests by fostering the interests of the community at large. More for you means more for me.

[...] The gift economy, in fostering relationships of gratitude and responsibility, relies on social witnessing: a community awareness of who is generous and who stingy which consequently determines the level of generosity shown to individual community members. How, and by whom, your needs are met directly relates to how you have treated others.

**In the modern world we often bemoan the loss of community. It seems the more “affluent” the society at large the more keenly the loss of community is felt. But this should not surprise us for the dynamic of money undermines community bonds by removing our interdependence, our needing each other. This need for one another is the foundation of community.**

The gift circulates through the community – and we should note that the movement of the gift is indeed one of *circulation* and not exchange, for where, as Charles Eisenstein points out, our gifts are exchanged we are moving into the realm of barter and are no longer in the realm of the gift. As the gift flows through the community it infuses the feelings of generosity and gratitude that strengthen our communal ties as our needs are met. Spirit is breathed into the community.

### The Community of Life

*What is the origin of this monstrous machine that chews up beauty and spits out money?*

– Charles Eisenstein, *Sacred Economics*

The fictitious story of money's origins in barter conveniently supports the notion that markets will spontaneously emerge, sooner or later, wherever there are human societies. Again, David Graeber shows us that **such an assumption is highly problematic as the emergence of markets had far more to do with rulers meeting the needs of their armies than it ever did with meeting the needs of the people.** If markets are inevitable then it is only to certain kinds of societies. Getting “the people” to participate usually required forceful coercion such as undermining social networks and stealing land (enclosing the commons, or privatizing, as we call it today. As [Pierre-Joseph] Proudhon said, “*Property is theft*”). Of

course the simplest method is to start issuing currency and then demand taxes paid in that currency. What was formerly given away is now sold and co-operation disintegrates into competition. The market emerges.

**The functioning of markets requires an element of scarcity.** There must be a need for something not easily obtained. Either new needs must be manufactured or the meeting of existing needs made difficult. When intrepid explorers, missionaries, anthropologists and the like encountered “primitive” societies they did not find barter or market mentalities because what they generally found were people who lived in a world of abundance, not scarcity. Needs were met by the gifts of the gods. The world, the entire community of life, was a gift circle where, as long as behaviour appropriate to a gift circle was maintained, all ones needs would be met.

Of course, the simple minded savages couldn't possibly be allowed to continue living in such a state of ignorance. One of any number of ingenious methods of inducing scarcity was introduced, necessitating the establishment of markets, the use of money, the collection of taxes, debt, poverty, theft, prisons, and so on, and so on... From living by the gifts of the gods to survival of the fittest. More for you means less for me.

If money has undermined the bonds of human community then it's severing of our connection to the larger community of life has been even more complete. As the quote opening this section suggests, our economy is a monstrous machine that consumes the natural world to create money. Although the overt buying and selling of human life is generally looked down upon in our “enlightened” age [ed. – *at least, if it isn't for an hourly rate...*] the rest of life is still up for grabs. “*For a price, you can buy anything, even the pelt of an endangered species.*” [Eisenstein] **Although money is not the root cause of our (self)exile from the community of life, but is, rather, a manifestation of it,** it has nevertheless become a ferocious enforcer of the belief that we are discreet beings separate from the rest of life.

Our sense of separation goes back at least to the Neolithic and the first agriculturalists. With agriculture a new binary view of the world is born, a world of competition, of us against them: crops or weeds, beneficial insects or pests, domestic or wild, good or evil, etcetera, etcetera. Some, such as John Zerzan, would place the origins of our separation even earlier with the emergence of symbolic culture; representational language, number and art. No matter when we place the origins of our separation, with money we have

carried it to its conclusion and today find ourselves in a world of abstractions where everything has been reduced to number.

The fate of life is determined by the monetary value that can be extracted from it. If we see more value in a field of soy beans than a prairie then prairie will become field of soy beans. *Sacred land or uranium mine? Rain forest or hardwood decking? Endangered species or pelt?* Numbers in a ledger.

### Living in the Real World

From the mistaken view of ourselves as discrete and separate beings we have developed our stories, our cultures, philosophies, sciences, technologies, economies...that support and reinforce this view. We have written ourselves into a monstrous fiction and remade the earth as a backdrop for our dystopian plot.

*But we are not separate, are we?* When we look at a forest freshly clear cut we feel the pain of the forest. We feel the sense of loss of the creatures whose home has been razed. Thousands of years of steadily increasing separation has not completely extinguished our sense that we are those creatures, we are those trees. **When we allow ourselves, when our rational mind momentarily drops the prison guard role it has been educated to play, we feel the truth of our interdependence.**

Returning to live in the real world requires just that we *live* in that world of interdependence. That is to say, not just believe, or even know, but *live*.

From the moment of your birth, no, before that even, you have been receiving the gifts necessary to sustain and nourish you. Before you were capable of “earning your keep” you received the gifts of life, of Earth. It is no wonder that we often experience deep feelings of gratitude for simply being alive, for we've been receiving precious gifts non-stop the whole time we've been here. What has changed? Why do we now feel anxious that what we need will no longer be given to us? Is it because we have not maintained the behaviour appropriate to a gift circle?

Marcel Mauss noted that traditional gift economies contained a trio of obligations: “*the obligation to give, the obligation to accept, and the obligation to reciprocate.*” [Hyde] We have all been given gifts, ways in which we are able to make unique contributions to life on our beautiful planet and, if we are not to renege on our obligations then we must be giving generously of our gifts. To do not what you love but what you think you must do “for the money” is to renege on your obligations. Behave inappropriately and the gift circle is broken. To overcome your

survival anxiety, to put aside the monetized illusion of security, and wholly offer up your gifts for the well-being of all life is to re-enter the gift circle.

[...] To refuse a gift is to proclaim that we do not want to be in relationship with the giver. The obligation to accept also requires that we be open to all gifts that come our way, that is, *not to have fixed ideas about how our needs are to be met*. Let's face it, we don't know best. The evidence of that is everywhere. Our "knowing" is so wrapped up in our story of separation that it is woven through with desires to control the world around us. It is time to let go. Remember, the "weeds" are often more nutritious than the crops.

The earth gives us what we need. Long before we got the idea that we could run the show, Earth generously provided for our every need. We must reciprocate if we want to live in the gift. Nothing can demonstrate this more clearly than looking at the current state of this planet. Since attempting to take over the reins we've run vital life support systems in to the ground. Not reciprocating the gift ceases to flow. To rejoin the circle we must use the gifts given us and give back to Earth.

## 'ANARCHIST RELATIONS IN PRACTICE'

[A]narchists in the small Catalan city of Manresa held the first Gathering of Libertarian Infrastructures [in 2015]. Specifically, the initiative reflects a sentiment that there is a lack of creative or constructive projects that put anarchist relations in practice, support and amplify the struggle, and utilize anarchist methods to respond to the needs of daily life. **In fact, as the call out for the gathering states, Catalunya boasts an unusually high number of projects that embark in such a direction, but such projects quickly become divorced from other aspects of the struggle.**

We know what often happens. Cooperatives and projects for a solidaristic economy end up in self-exploitation or even transform into capitalist businesses with an alternative character. Projects that fail due to exhaustion fall into a productivist logic, or collapse under the imposed need to pay rent.

**Projects that little by little distance themselves from the struggle as they come to inhabit a reality different from that of those comrades who remain "in the streets." Projects that limit themselves to a legalistic path in order to avoid repression and the significant loss of energy and material that such repression brings.** Or, projects that, even as they evade capitalist dynamics, condemn themselves to self-isolation in their search for self-sufficiency [ed. – see '*The Matter of Knowing Who We Are*'].

Other comrades, often the youngest and most active, develop an idea of struggle centered on abstract and combative activities, such as writing and debating, protest, and sabotage, all of which are vital, but are by themselves incomplete. Thus, the constructive part of the struggle is divorced and distanced from practices of collective self-defense, propaganda, and theorization. In the end, all of us are weakened.

This is a predictable dynamic. Capitalism always offers us tools for "achieving our dreams" and realizing any and all creative projects, but they are tools that reconduct us towards mercantile and productive relations. Democracy will also give us permission for nearly any initiative, but with regulations and conditions that will not allow us to step out of the game that the powerful control so easily.

[...] Given that the recent proliferation of new organizations in Catalunya, and new failures, has led to a climate of cynicism, the level of participation in the gathering came as a surprise.

Around 70 people from 45 different projects turned out, from all the provinces of Catalunya and beyond, from city, town, and countryside. The projects came from the fields of free education, rural self-sufficiency and ecological farming, pirate radios and propaganda, printers and publishers, self-organized medicine and healthcare, artisanal crafts, carpentry and metal workshops, liberated and open-source technology workshops, internet platforms, and more.

**One of the objectives of the gathering was to transform the dominant mode of meetings and encounters in a way that reflects the social relations we want to foster.** Aside from debates (on the concept of the gift economy and on the idea of using our projects to counter the results of austerity), people also came together in diverse spaces: a decentralized and informal space for weaving networks, a space for workshops of artisanal and other skills, moments for communal work

and moments for play and games. **The activities of care – the kitchen and the children's space – were in central, visible locations and were staffed collectively.**

Money was not present during the gathering; on the contrary everything was shared as a gift, and the few costs for the preparation were assumed by everyone via a donation jar and a visible list of expenses, which were removed as soon as the minor debts were repaid. There was a gifts table where people from varied projects left samples of what they make, from books and pamphlets to homemade remedies to vegetables from the garden.

After a night of healthy partying, on Sunday morning thirty people worked shoulder to shoulder to fix up new spaces in La Ruda (the anarchist athenaeum in Manresa where the gathering was held). The purpose of putting aside time for communal labor was to take advantage of the collective force of all the people present and to get to know one another in a non-intellectual space.

Emphasis was also placed on the question of reskilling and artisanal techniques. The pertinent analysis holds that capitalism currently trains us only in the skills necessary for increasingly absurd jobs [ed. – see '*Tools of the Technology*'], skills that are useless for the self-organization of survival, whereas useful skills and artisanal crafts are disappearing.

New technologies make us progressively stupider and more dependent<sup>[1]</sup>, meaning that our values of mutual aid, solidarity, and self-organization rarely go beyond a superficial, abstract plane. As such, the gathering constitutes an attempt to visibilize and encourage those projects that recover skills such as healing, carpentry, agriculture, and more.

And perhaps most centrally, the initiative marks a strategic decision to encourage a gift economy, so that such projects will not perpetually have to support themselves within a capitalist market or with alternative currencies that still perpetuate a quantitative and productivist logic.

As one text distributed at the gathering states, **the gift economy is that which most closely approaches anarchist ideals, and it is one we still practice in our intimate spaces.** Yet in general anarchists have not made a concerted effort to spread the relationships and practices based in reciprocity and a true communal feeling, necessary to enable such an economy, meaning that the only alternatives are the cooperatives and alternative currencies that never seem to leave the capitalist orbit.

Participants set themselves the objective of holding a gathering twice a year.

1. ed. – Yes, even the open-source, participatory ones: "Intelligence is within anyone's reach through reading, reflection, study, curiosity, discussion, even sensitivity. Intelligence can stimulate and can be stimulated, but it cannot be shared. Because it is unique, and differs from individual to individual. Those who speak of "shared intelligence" are speaking of power. When everyone starts to go to Wikipedia to know who, what, where and when – and no one any longer makes the effort to read dictionaries, encyclopedias, books, to confront their various versions and try to understand – that day (and it doesn't seem distant) Wikipedia will be dictating Law, univocal and equal for all. Its successive reconfigurations will not be able to change in any way this totalitarian effect, but rather will consolidate it. Shared intelligence can only be an enormous project of standardization and control. Aspiring to a shared intelligence means hoping for the advent of a single modern thought" (To the Customers: Insurrection and Doublethink).

# WE CAN BE WORSE STILL

## – reflections & thoughts on the month following the disappearance of Santiago Maldonado

[ed. – Report by 'Some anarchists in Buenos Aires', concerning the rage unfolding in Argentina, a country haunted by the ghosts of 30,000 disappeared during the 1976-1983 military dictatorship, and more continuing into democracy...]

**To update so far:** one month to the day after

Santiago's disappearance, tens of thousands of people demonstrated on September 1st in Buenos Aires, with six cops wounded in the capital and more coming under molotov fire in Bolsón, Patagonian region. Across the Brazilian border, the Argentine consulate in Porto Alegre was paint-splattered, while barricades were erected and police attacked in Valparaíso, Chile. So far, aside from embassy rallies in a couple of capitals and attacks on Benetton stores (see below) in Milan and Madrid, there has been little reaction on the so-called 'Old Continent'... This was also noted by some comrades posterizing "in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula:

A Corunha, a port city from which hundreds of immigrant ships left for Latin America. But practically nil is the information on this side of the Atlantic!... Nor did we expect it to be any different. Colonizing Europe has never ceased to be so, but little is said here about the devastation European multinationals and their allies carry out in South America: it is hidden behind the mask of NGOs and the most hypocritical and paternalistic charity."

These events unfolded as part of the struggle of the Mapuche people (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg59**, also including a glossary of the Mapudungun vocabulary below), fighting against European colonisers more than 500 years (immediately before which they stalled and defeated the Inca Empire's southward push). Wallmapu, their historic territory, is cut in half by the nation-state borders of Argentina and Chile, so they cannot move freely around their native land. The Mapuche are also no stranger to forced police disappearances, including under democracy; such as José Huanante, detained September 2005 in the Chilean city Puerto Montt, never to be seen again.

Especially in light of the history of colonists from the U.K. (famously from Wales) emigrating to Argentina, we'd like to add some words to counter the historical amnesia so many of us seem to find ourselves in right now. Following the British-funded 'Conquest of the Desert' genocides (see below), the Argentine President donated 900,000 hectares to the British company Argentine Southern Land, to construct a railroad for the country's export system to better profit from the expropriation. **Today, the case is not atypical of Joseph "Joe" Lewis** (British business

magnate among the 300 richest people on the planet,) whose massive purchase on Patagonian land included the Hidden Lake, a Mapuche site of high significance, to which he subsequently closed access. Last summer, Mapuche fighters burned his excavators preparing a hydroelectric dam along the

Rio Escondido, on Lewis' private property, being built in cooperation with Edenor electric company, of which Lewis is the biggest stock owner. (That attack was also in solidarity with Facundo Jones Huala of the Cushamen community (see below), wanted for extradition to Chile over Mapuche land recuperation actions, in the end released only to be re-arrested and now awaiting transportation over the border to face 'terror' charges for arson on a colonist farm.)

Since 1991, Argentine Southern Land was acquired by the Benetton family of Italy, where it produces 10% of the wool for fashion chain United Colors of Benetton, in addition to the mining, deforestation, transgenic soy plantations (see **Market Pressured to Temporarily Drop G.M. Product Lines After Contamination Campaign Claimed, Lombardy**)

and other extraction elsewhere on more than million hectares it owns in Argentine Patagonia (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg66**).

In the Chubut province near the Chilean border has become a focus point for landless indigenous workers who since 2015 have set up the Pu Lof community on unused rural tracts around the town of Cushamen (Mapuche territory for over 1,400 years, which Benetton now holds the deeds for), and has seen an explosion of violence from authorities intent on breaking the recuperation movement, with the first brutal mass raids ordered by Benetton in June 2016. (Among the dwellings, clothes and equipment torched by police have been stocks of organic autochthonous seeds; this is because Mapuche still preserve their seeds

without genetic modification which stops multinationals from selling their own tailored stock and creating a dependence on copyrighted versions. Since the raids, others have pointed out Benetton's political relations with the Minister of Homeland Security, Patricia Bullrich.) A pamphlet distributed in Pontevedra (Spain) reminds us that "while exhibiting disgusting advertising where they show people of all colours and ethnicities smiling and so happy (but all following the racist and colonial stereotypes of Western civilisation, of course), [United Colors of Benetton] crush the Mapuche communities that try to recover their land, today bought by that company to pasture the 1,000s of sheep they have enslaved to produce wool."

Anarchists, for almost as long as they have called themselves such, have a history that in its better moments has always included solidarity with anti-colonial insurrections; while in 1850, in New Orleans, Joseph Déjacque (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg29**) dreamed of slave rebellions and the

dissolution of racial boundaries, Louis Michel embodied these dreams quarter of a century later by joining her force with rebels of so-called New Caledonia and Algeria (see **'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'**). Likewise today, as in other

parts of the world, in Argentina anarchists and Mapuche find themselves side-by-side facing the enemy, as was the case when Diego Sebastián Petrisans and Leandro Sebastián Morel went to prison (with a third comrade of the Anarchist Black Cross of Buenos Aires forced underground) after Leandro robbed a T.V. production company owned by a host, media producer and businessman known for evicting Mapuche from their own land to build vast tourist complexes. Rather than an expression of an updated third-(fourth?)-worldism, "allyship" (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg67**) or common Western fetish for indigenous culture (see **Fraud, Fantasy & Fiction in Environmental Writing/The Invention of the Tribe'Q**), the facet we find vital in anarchist involvement in such struggles is the survival of other ways of being in this increasingly monocultural and totalitarian world, as imagination itself becomes an endangered species; and lessons we could learn along these lines from engaging with indigenous examples that Chilean agitators of Sin Banderas Ni

Fronteras describe as "[o]ffensive actions of resistance that, combined with the propagation and implementation of ways of living and relationship modes contrary to those imposed by the state, capitalism and civilisation, build an antagonistic reality that preoccupies power and keeps it busy with its eradication, isolation and extermination."

**October 20th, the Argentinian State announced what we had intuited already with heavy hearts;**

the body of Santiago had just been "found" (i.e. planted) in the icy waters of the Chubut River, 300 meters upstream from the place where he was seen

being captured, an area that had been raked multiple times by family and friends. "Santiago Maldonado who fought on the barricades of Chiloé [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg24**], defending the sea. Santiago Maldonado who fought for the immense southern land. Every time the strong Patagonian wind blows, he will be there. Whenever the rebels of the world try to storm the heavens, he will be there. Rest comrade, the sea, the land and the forests for which you gave your life are waiting to provide you shelter" (statement by comrades of the Giraldo Library). **They have taken the comrade away from us**, but we hope all that remains in their hands is the compost that will fertilise a thousand more rebellious roots, nourished by the ash of this genocidal, ecocidal system and its components.

And indeed, within 24 hours of the expert's proclamation on the body, the municipal Casa de la Provincia in Río Negro was trashed and left with a banner for the freedom of Facundo Jones Huala, the Argentine Military Attaché's office facade in Montevideo (Uruguay) was badly fire damaged, and we imagine more by the time this reaches you...

In the broader context, (by surely conservative figures) in 2017 so far almost four people a week (largely indigenous) are killed worldwide defending the land, especially from mines, plantations, wild animal exploitation and infrastructure projects, and particularly in Latin America. Agribusiness has comparatively come to the fore compared to the composition of these figures in recent years, as industry demand grows for soy, palm oil, sugarcane and beef (which, besides the aforementioned wool,

Argentina is famous for). However also in the 'richest' countries, defenders of the earth are increasingly under the gun as the scrabble for 'resources' heats up further; for example during the Standing Rock mobilisation in the U.S.A. (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg16**) North Dakota legislators only narrowly decided against a bill allowing drivers to run over and kill protesters without being jailed (similar laws have in fact passed in other U.S.

States in response to confrontational road, dock and airport blockades), while on its heels in that colonial territory 66-year-old James "Jim" Leroy Marker died

in Florida in defense of the Withlacoochee River after firing on the protested Sabal Trail pipeline and its construction equipment and getting into a fatal high-speed chase by County Sheriffs. (He may have chosen the date and location to coincide with a call

"to honor the anniversary of the 1973 Wounded Knee Stand-off on the Pine Ridge Reservation [ed. – see the companion piece to **Return Fire vol.3: Colonisation**] and to stop the pipeline from going in the ground through the wetlands and endangered species habitat of Halpata Tastanaki Preserve (a site named after a Seminole leader of the armed resistance that fought U.S. invasion of indigenous communities in the mid-1800s).")

**Finally, just in these last days of autumn**, young Mapuche warrior Rafael Nahuel fell to Argentinian police bullets on November 25th in Río Negro as the eviction of the mountain-top Lafken Winkul land recuperation, which he had travelled to join along with his aunt and cousin, ended in a shoot-out.

Enough being said, let's hear the words of imprisoned anarchist Marcelo (see **Rebels Behind Bars: Concerning the Juridical Situation of Our Comrade Marcelo Villaruel Sepulveda**) about his relation with Santiago. "Since we were taken prisoner in the region dominated by the Argentine state [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg72**], our paths crossed. There were us, the prisoners in the province of Newken and there was Santiago, in the city of La Plata, next to us in a universe of active comrades, sharing complicity and standing in solidarity... It's been more than 9 years since our footsteps have crossed the continuous path of the brotherhood, this path that sets both of us on the same side of the trench[...] The rebellious and ancestral fire is incinerating the machines of predatory capital, the insurrectionist blood spilled from our fallen comrades is among our war rituals..."

On August 1st, members of the *Pu Lof* Mapuche community in resistance in the province Cushamen barricaded National Route 40, along with allies in solidarity. They cut off traffic in solidarity against the legal proceedings confronting *el Lonko* Facundo Jones Huala (for the second time). Minutes later, cars and trucks arrived carrying about thirty border police armed with rifles. The *peñis* (Mapuches) began throwing rocks, responding to the presence of the bastard forces of order. The Gendarmerie advances to the shots, burning the precarious houses and belongings of the *Lof*, forcing the occupiers to retreat across a river. **Santiago Maldonado ("Lechuga" [Lettuce] or "el Brujo" [the Witch-Doctor]) fell behind the rest.** Some of the inhabitants of the *Lof* saw that the Gendarmerie grabbed Santiago; others testified as to hearing the police say they "got one."

Afterwards, images and testimony began to circulate about how Santiago was missing, and that it seemed the Gendarmerie had taken him away in a "unimog" all-terrain military vehicle. The authorities were silent through this whole process.

On Friday, August 4th, various anarchists and individuals in solidarity entered the seat of government in Chubut province, demanding Santiago's return. The place was ripe for destruction. Computers, notebooks, windows, and decorations were all viciously destroyed, and fliers and graffiti were left behind referring to the repression in Cushamen.

On Monday, August 7th, a gathering was called in the Plaza del Congreso, bringing various organizations and groups together with Santiago's family. The gathering ended up being quite large, and many comrades showed up. Enraged not only because of what had happened, but also because the political apparatus – getting ready for their elections – had been distributing fliers for their Leftist Front. On the same day, after the gathering, Entre Ríos street was cut off, and the occupiers threw rocks and firecrackers at the infantry, fending off the two city police and one National Congress guardsman who had been stationed nearby. Afterward, two police motorcycles were set ablaze. In the end, the group dispersed, without any arrests or injuries on our side.

On Friday, August 11th, marches and actions were coordinated throughout various parts of the country: Bolsón, Bariloche, Rosario, and Buenos Aires. In the capital, human rights groups (including a section of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, the mothers of individuals disappeared during the period of dictatorship), gathered alongside family members and friends of Lechuga's, with

more leftist organizations bringing together a "peaceful" gathering in the Plaza de Mayo, in front of the Pink House, the seat of government. In front of the multitude, one of Lechuga's brothers read some of his writing, leaving his anarchist, anti-police position completely clear.

One of the things that makes us quite angry is the way these events have been used by political parties – the PO, the MST, the MAS socialist convergence, and Kirchnerist parties<sup>[1]</sup> – as well as NGOs, and unions like the CGT [*General Confederation of Labor*], with its dark history during the Peronist period,<sup>[2]</sup> involving the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance and para-police groups. They use partial images and histories of our comrade to give themselves a few more kernels of legitimacy in the middle of an electoral process. **The kidnapping of Lechuga is not a political campaign.** These scavengers would never feel strange defending private property, the border police, or even the same governments that repress them and bury them in the misery of everyday life – because they themselves desire to obtain that same power, and exercise that same authority. We have nothing to do with them, or with their conciliatory responses to our comrade's kidnapping.

On Thursday the 17th, a march was called in Córdoba Capital, where a great multitude demanded that Santiago be returned, alive and whole. The police deployed a massive riot-control apparatus. That same night, in the early morning, some anonymous deployed a rudimentary device that burned out the doors at the entrance to the Association of Non-commissioned Officers of the National Gendarmerie in Córdoba. No one claimed responsibility. Days later, a national march against trigger-happy cops resulted in confrontations and destruction throughout the center of Córdoba. Later, various anarchist, platformist, and political spaces were raided, including a dining hall, as well as the homes of mothers whose children were murdered by the police. Here, they only left with posters, flags, and fliers that had to do with Santiago's case (as well as the milk from the dining hall). A few people were detained, but they were released after a few hours.

On Thursday the 24th, the group H.I.J.O.S. (made up of children of the disappeared) and other leftist groups called for a gathering and march in the Plaza San Martín in La Plata. Quite a few people attended, including a black bloc

of anarchists. During the march, there was vandalism on some of the central streets of the city. The march ended in the same plaza where it had begun, across the street from the Buenos Aires Senate. Under the astonished gaze of several indignant citizens, the street was cut off, a well-placed truck was destroyed, and the senate was attacked with rocks and a pair of molotov cocktails, resulting in some destruction and burning the facade of the building. Two hours later, two individuals left large cans filled with naphtha<sup>[3]</sup>, burning two cars parked next to the senate. No one claimed responsibility for the attack. Several days later, the intelligence chief of the Buenos Aires police was fired.

**In some of these gatherings and marches, as well as in the streets and universities, and above all on social networks, we have seen that the a majority of the public has empathized with Santiago, and a smaller part has supported violent actions. It is true that in Argentina, to speak of forced disappearances is to speak of the military dictatorship and of histories that have been engraved in social sensibility. The vast majority of politicians try to hide the continuation of the repressive apparatus – hide the similarities between the dictatorship and the current democratic government. Repression, torture, and forced disappearances never really ended...**

We believe that it is necessary to expand this conflict. From the first moments, comrades and allies creatively demonstrated around the world, first in Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, and Peru, but then in the U.S., Spain, India, France, Syria, Colombia, Mexico, and many other corners of this worn-out planet. These demonstrations have spread not only the news of what happened to Lechuga, but the fact that solidarity must be internationalist and without borders other than the limits that we set for ourselves.

### **The Press Takes Aim & the State Pulls the Trigger**

What to say about the news articles and journalistic investigations by mercenaries like Jorge Lanata, Mauro Viale, Eduardo



Feinmann, and other information lackeys in the press? They put forward the name of the Mapuche Ancestral Resistance (RAM, a separatist guerrilla group), crediting them with more than thirty actions from one day to the next, from flyering to the burning of ranches, the death of a border policeman in San Martin de los Andes, and the sale of weapons and drugs. They pass along images of possible future Santiago Maldonado's – individuals who could face the same fate – in Mendoza, Entre Ríos, and Buenos Aires; they put together theories that Santiago was a hostage of the Mapuches, that he had died in an attack on a ranch, that he was never in the Lof, or that he was a simple artisan or hippy backpacker.

After the attack on the seat of government in Chubut, the press attributed the attack to a cell of the RAM, stating that the attack "alarmingly" took place two blocks from the obelisk, and that they went in shooting; but if we look at the place for two seconds through the photos that were released, we can see clearly that there were several circle-A signs painted up, and that the damage was not done by bullets. Their exaggerations really are limitless...

**The state needs to vindicate its own authority – it needs to create internal enemies. The unemployment crisis and the general economic crisis have resulted in an emergent malaise that can be felt clearly in the streets<sup>[4]</sup>; what could be better than blaming the economic collapse on non-Argentine students, like Jorge Lanata's news program argued? Or blaming the destruction of the formal economy on pirate disc vendors, like the América 24 news channel tried to do? What could be better than the president Mauricio Macri saying that the workers have to stop messing around with all of this about blocking roads, have to going over their bosses heads – because this discourages foreign investment?**

Declarations from Patricia Bullrich (the Minister of National Security) have said that she won't allow the Gendarmerie to be crucified ("...I'm not going to throw the Gendarmerie under the bus..."), claimed that the Maldonado case is not a forced disappearance, and declared through clenched teeth that she thinks it's impossible that thirty border police would

conspire to kill and disappear someone. As she says, this police force is not the same as it was 40 years ago, always playing the same game of "bad dictatorship, good democracy [ed. – see *Who Is It?*]."

The Bullrich family has always known how to defend their ideological and economic interests. Adolfo Bullrich headed a business that auctioned land off after the disastrous Conquest of the Desert – a campaign pushed forward by the ten-president Avellaneda and continued by Julio A. Roca, the goal of which was to annihilate the native peoples who lived in Patagonia, seize immense land holdings, reaffirm national sovereignty, and generate juicy business contracts with English and Welsh companies, as well as whoever wanted to invest. Esteban Bullrich, Patricia's brother, left his post as Minister of Education in order to stand for election. In an election ad, Esteban spoke of the positive changes that the Cambiemos government had generated during those months, stating "*We have put more kids in school, more pavement on the streets, and more young men in prison...*" Are these words surprising, coming from someone who defended the repressive murderer Luis Patti<sup>[5]</sup> so that he could exercise his position in congress? He did declare that in a democracy, there is space for debate between different ideologies...

After the proposal for a week of action for Santiago went out over the internet, state security forces were put on alert – so much so that a senior official in the intelligence department of the federal police sent a document to the governor of the province of Buenos Aires, María Eugenia Vidal (of the center-right PRO party) ordering an increase in security and patrols in the streets. The document described possible attacks, and risks to individuals belonging to the security forces, infrastructure, and

buildings. The result was not only a visible increase in the number of police (in plazas, border police buildings, train stations, police precincts, and troubled neighborhoods), but that they brought out the shiny toys that we hadn't seen for a long while: Federal Police armored vehicles, water cannon trucks, and troop transport vehicles all over the place. Everything but the army in the streets.

This new escalation of repression that has been taking place – and will continue – in the streets of the Capital, demonstrates that the ministry of security, as well as the bosses of police "intelligence" intend to restrict all solidarity, rage, and the actions that were unleashed following Santiago's disappearance. Perhaps these sparks can bring us to break new limits...

In some of our spaces, their harassment is plainly visible. Now it's not just phone taps and cops following some comrades home, but investigative teams taking pictures, infantry trucks on the corner, and patrols coming and going.

**All of this responds to a specific context.** In some neighborhoods of the province of Buenos Aires, police have been stopping members of collectives to ask for their documents and check their belongings; the notable increase in patrols and police officers is not just an effort at control and surveillance, but also at the same time, an attempt to clean up the terrible image of both the border police and the cops. During Children's Day, border police brought trucks of toys to different schools and cafeterias – that is to say, they shamelessly repeated slogans of "solidarity" in the same places where they perform intelligence work, go in shooting, and carry out fierce repression. If their intelligence work was designed under the framework of Project X in the Kirchner epoch, when they built a database



31.08.17, Buenos Aires: headquarters of the "anti-terrorist" Federal Operations Special Group burns; after the demonstration the next day, the 35th Gendarmerie Battalion near met the same by molotovs, and still the revolt wasn't over...

following militants and organizations, now they've come out onto the field of play more than ever before, becoming one more shock force that the State can employ in its favor.

Of course, the law follows not far behind, not only with the reform to law 24.660 (which removes almost all prison benefits and temporary releases, giving more decisive power to the Penal Service), but also the increases in sentences, broadening legal definitions of illicit association, carrying weapons, and damage to private property.

## Relationships Between Mapuches & Anarchists

We have seen that in the last couple years, some Mapuche communities have been leaving aside legalistic angles of struggle, and have decided to occupy the properties of large landholders and portions of state land. Machines have been burned, there have been coordinated attacks on various positions on single ranches – similar to what is going on in the Wallmapu on the Chilean side.

The media have taken it upon themselves to declare that all Mapuches belong to the RAM, or that the Mapuches who live in the Lof belong to the RAM, generating a perfect internal enemy. In reality, the RAM are nothing more than the abbreviation with which some Mapuches claim their actions in the Wallmapu in Argentina.

*Ei Lonko* Facundo Jones Huala is recognized as belonging to this Mapuche group. At the moment, he is detained in the prison at Esquel, where he spent 18 days on hunger strike, awaiting a presumed extradition to Chile. He has recognized the occurrence of a historic confrontation not only with the Argentine state, but the Chilean state as well, along with the corporations that have devastated indigenous territories without fear of reprisal, with the excuse of "progress" [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg11]. **This is an ancestral struggle that has lasted more than 500 years. The RAM is only a small expression of this long struggle.**

Harassment and persecution not only by the forces of order, but also by the business owners and the media is disgusting. They try to justify both repression and the advance of neocolonialism. They throw out headlines alleging that the Mapuches are connected to the FARC [ed. – *Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Marxist-Leninist guerrillas*], that they have military assault weapons, that they are "fake Indians", and many other idiocies.

For us as anarchists, it's impossible not to be angry with the ways that the state harasses, attacks, and disappears the



**Left:** 31.12.12, Police post totally burned, including state-of-the-art technology delivered the week before, at the Cardenal Samoré international mountain pass in the Andes (the only one open year-round) closing it to freight for two weeks. **Right:** 28.08.17, as the 'Luchsinger case' (see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg67) trial against 10 Mapuche opens, 29 forestry trucks in Los Ríos ('Chilean' Wallmapu) torched by arms-wielding fighters of Weichan Auka Mapu (Fight of the Rebel Territory); who incinerated 18 more in the two weeks before.



Mapuche, as well as the Qom<sup>[6]</sup>, the Wichi<sup>[7]</sup>, or the Guarani<sup>[8]</sup>, not to mention the tribes living in the Amazon, who resist the advance of the machines and "human progress" understood as civilization. We share much with the Mapuche who are fighting in the south of the region, but there is also a chasm distancing us from them. Their forms of organization and the relationships that they have developed, involving themselves with nature and the land are a demonstration of their own, specific cosmovision. As anarchists, we recoil from their desire to advance and obtain their own Mapuche nation. We respect their rebel dignity, and will stand in solidarity, but we do not share in the totality of their struggle<sup>[9]</sup>.

## No Demands on the State; Permanent Conflict Against Authority

We all desire that our comrade be returned alive, that he might follow whatever path he might desire. We know that the state is responsible for this disappearance, because that is one of the functions of persecution and the "extermination" of the "disturbing elements" that impede the normal functioning of society. For the same reason, we cannot demand anything of our persecutors. They are responsible for the disappearances for trafficking, connections between the narco and the police, executions of youth in our neighborhoods at the hands of the cops, the approval of laws raising sentences, playing with the lives of prisoners, responsible for the application of new technologies for social control, for the destruction of natural territories in order to put up concrete walls and plantations of soy or GMO corn – everything that turns the wheels of capitalist progress.

**We feel that they have tried to depoliticize our comrade.** They have attempted to deny his anarchist convictions, and they have tried to hold him up as a slogan for one more political campaign. On one hand, Cristina Kirchner and her bootlickers seem to have very short memories: They talk about Santiago, but they evaporate when we bring up Julio

López. Although Hebe de Bonafini (one of the founders of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo) might have said that López was a jailer and that Santiago was a social activist, she said it to defend Kirchnerism. And what's more, it's a lie – López was a carpenter and was disappeared in 2006 because he was going to testify against Miguel Osvaldo Etchecolatz, a leader of the forces of repression during the dictatorship. López' disappearance demonstrates that even after 15 years, the military still has plenty of power. Nor do they want to talk about Luciano Arruga – a youth from the marginal neighborhood Lomas de Mirador, who was kidnapped, murdered, and buried as a John Doe in the la Chacarita cemetery, because he refused to steal for the police. Nor do they want to remember Cristian Ibáñez, who was detained by the police only to later appear to have "killed himself" in his cell in a police precinct in Jujuy, or Marcelo Cuellar, who was murdered in the town of Libertador General San Martín in 2003, at a march following Ibáñez' murder – both were militants with the Combative Classist Current. They don't want to talk about Carlos Fuentealba, killed by police repression in Neuquén during a labor organizers' roadblock of Route 22nd in 2007, or Juan Carlos Erazo, killed in Mendoza in 2008 following a brain abscess resulting from an injury when he was hit by a rubber bullet and tear gas, during a factory takeover where he worked. They want to forget that on June 17th, 2010, Diego Bonefoi was murdered by police in Bariloche, shot in the back of the head. On the next day, the neighborhood organized a protest, and two more youths were killed in the resulting police repression: Nicolás Carrasco and Sergio Cárdenas. On October 20th of the same year, Mariano Ferreyra – a militant in the Workers' Party – was shot twice and killed by strikebreakers from the Railway Union, during a protest organized by workers whose jobs at Roca Railways in Avellanada had been outsourced. **During the Kirchner era, indigenous peoples have had the same fortune.** The indigenous community member Javier Chocobar, part of a Diaguita community in

Tucumán, was resisting displacement alongside other members of the community. On October 12th, 2009, an ex-police member in service of the landowners drove in and started shooting, killing and injuring other inhabitants of the community. On November 23th, 2010, in Formosa, some indigenous Qom members of the community La Primavera blocked a road to reclaim their lands. The police repressed them violently, murdering two members of the community, Sixto Gómez and Roberto López...

This has not only taken place under Kirchnerism. All governments are of one color, and have dozens of repressive murders on their hands. Further back there are Víctor Choque, Teresa Rodríguez, Mauro Ojeda, Francisco Escobar, Aníbal Verón, Carlos Santillán, Oscar Barrios, the youths Maximiliano Tasca, Cristian Gómez, Adrián Matassa, Miguel Bro, Javier Barrionuevo, Petete Almirón, Dario Santillán and Maximiliano Kosteki, and so many more who have been beaten, tortured, disappeared, and murdered by the forces of order – in neighborhoods, in police precincts, in psychiatric hospitals, in brothels and jails.

Their hands are bloody – soaked with the blood of the marginalized, the blood of illegals, the blood of rebels. Passivity is not an option: it's time to demand vengeance. Vengeance against the executioners, and vengeance for the life of misery they have imposed. Vengeance for their constant violence. There has never been peace, with so many dead, and we know who is responsible. We know their names, their titles, and their intentions. They try to call us infiltrators, to call us violent, and we reply: **WE CAN BE WORSE STILL...**

1. ed. – A political group formed by supporters of the late Néstor Kirchner, president of Argentina from 2003 to 2007; and of his wife Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, president 2007-2015.

2. ed. – "Peronismo, largely the invention of [Juan Domingo] Peron's brilliant wife, Eva, was the nearest thing to perfect fascism that ever existed. Forget about all the propaganda and foolishness that has encrusted around the word "fascist." Forget about Nazi-fascism and the clerical fascism of Franco [ed. – see **Who Is It?**] and [António de Oliveira] Salazar [dictator of Portugal 1932-1968]. By fascism I mean the true essence of that was a revolutionary movement – or left-wing fascism. True pure fascism, as envisioned by Mussolini [ed. – see **Who Is It?**], grew out of the militant left-wing of Italian Socialism. It was an attempt to impose the Social Democratic program through dictatorship and armed force. The movement dispensed with the sterile positivism and evolutionism of Orthodox Marxism, substituting romantic emotionalism, extreme nationalism, a cult of the will and of the "man of action." The goal was to nationalize industry and subordinate all classes to the needs of the State. The working classes were to benefit from this revolution – but only so

long as they remained subservient to the Fascist State. Mussolini's problem was that he never had the support of the working class and thus had to turn to the traditional middle classes. Thus much of his revolution only remained on paper. This was not the situation which faced the Perons. More than 15 years before they took power, the generals smashed the powerful anarcho-syndicalist trade unions and only small remnants remained. [...] Eva Duarte-Peron was able to build a labour movement by filling an organizational vacuum (and where necessary smashing her weakened opponents). Thus Peronism (Argentine fascism) had a solid base among the workers. With prodding from the ever energetic Evita, the movement nationalized the banks, insurance companies, mines and railroads. As a result, Argentina had probably the largest state-capitalist sector outside of a Stalinist regime. Wages were forced up by decree and a host of social benefits introduced for Los Descamisados (literally "the shirtless ones," the working class followers of the Perons). Even the Church was attacked. The "anti-imperialist" game was played to an excess, alternating between violent anti-Americanism and anti-British sentiment. The foreigner was made the scapegoat for all of Argentina's problems" (Larry Gambone). The Peróns gave their name to the political movement known as Peronism (a political phenomenon that draws support from both the political left and political right), which in present-day Argentina is represented mainly by the Justicialist Party.

3. ed. – A flammable oil containing various hydrocarbons, obtained by the dry distillation of organic substances such as coal, shale, or petroleum.

4. ed. – Rising prices for transport, electricity, gas and food as well as austerity measures are a part of this, having provoked a general strike in April.

5. ed. – Argentine politician and a former senior police officer responsible for various tortures and murders from the 1970's onwards, now jailed. In 2008 while Patti's actions during the 1970's were still under formal investigation the Supreme Court of Argentina ruled that he should still be allowed to take his seat in Congress.

6. ed. – The Toba people, also known as the Qom people, are one of the largest indigenous groups in Argentina, and historically inhabited the region known today as 'the Pampas' as well as parts of Bolivia and Paraguay.

7. ed. – The Wichi are a large group of peoples ranging about the headwaters of the Bermejo River and the Pilcomayo River, in Argentina and Bolivia.

8. ed. – The traditional range of the Guaraní is in present-day Paraguay between the Uruguay River and lower Paraguay River, the Misiones Province of Argentina, southern Brazil, and parts of Uruguay and Bolivia.

9. ed. – We don't know enough about the Argentine context to say, but for sure there are Mapuche in struggle in Chile who do not want to erect an 'independent' nation-state, Mapuche or otherwise (see **Return Fire vol.1 pg68**, not to mention problems equating indigenous concepts of place to a possessive, territorial, noun-based language like English); obviously alongside others who do, comprising a very heterogeneous movement. Hence there is no single 'Mapuche struggle'. In Argentina, Isabel Huala, mother of

forementioned Facundo Jones Huala, asserts that "I'm not Argentine or Chilean. I'm Mapuche. I am pre-existing to both States. I do not want to build another nation." Albeit spoken from a very different context, we find it interesting to think over the words of one anarchist in Barcelona: "There's certainly an anarchism as a radical extreme of liberalism, in which rights are purely an individual affair, and therefore questions like culture and language – these are collective realities, realities that don't make sense on an individual scale – don't have any importance; and that strain of anarchism in my mind takes a fairly Eurocentric read of national liberation movements, only understanding them in a European or Western context in which national liberation movements are always nationalist and always seek the creation of a new nation-state. Whereas a vision that focuses more on cultural and linguistic self-determination would realize that nationalist movements also destroy that self-determination [through the homogenizing force inherent to all State-building projects.] Such a view would also take into account various anti-colonial struggles that were not fighting for a new State but that were fighting against the imposition of the State (as a Western artifact). And you could also consider that probably the four most revolutionary, multitudinary examples of anarchism in practice would be Cataluña/Aragón 1936, Machinochina in 1919, the Balkans commune in 1903 and the Shinmin commune in Manchuria in 1929; three out of four of those arose in part because anarchists took part in an anti-statist, anti-nationalist way. So there's certainly a rich history there and a lot of room to maneuver that doesn't put us in the dead-end of nationalism." More strongly, another comrade from the same territory describes the more 'radical' version of this liberalism: "Starting from the fact that "every nation and all cultural identity is an artificial social construct of domination," there is a cosmopolitanism straight out of a catalog that, under the mask of a sort of fictional "nihilism" (culture is domination, ergo, deny culture, we deny civilisation completely, forgetting that our own anarchist ideas and nihilism itself are cultural constructs and fruit of that same civilisation) plays the game of domination without even stopping to reflect on it. It is common to find among anarchists, especially those anarchists born in the so-called "First World" and in countries or regions where there have been no centrifugal tensions, that slogans, in principle valid and legitimate, such as "Neither Homeland nor Borders" or "The Poor Have No Country", become an apology for a sort of "citizenship of the world" more false than a plastic coin. I ask all these people: what is more cosmopolitan than neoliberal globalisation, cultural homogenization, the disappearance of identities and cultures, the ways of being, existing and acting in a territory, and the imposition of what I would call "substitutes for uprooting"; that is, this vulgar culture of emptiness, where no-one knows, understands or relates to their territory and environment because of the lack of a worldview that allows them to understand and attack their conditions of existence from their own context; where the same products are consumed here as in China, with the same canned flavors; we speak the same colonising languages, and we think of the same terms and the same frameworks that have been instilled in us all, without even asking ourselves where all that comes from: beyond repeating that "everything is a construct" and conforming to that?" (*The Unbearable Folly of Being: a Critique of Referendums & Anarchism*).

# WHO IS IT?

[ed. – This text dates back to the early 2000's; since then, if anything we have seen an intensification of the totalitarian aspects that democracy exhibits, for example in the wave of expansionist wars the Western powers have undertaken to install regimes (itself nothing new, but with an more explicit emphasis on the compulsory moral character of democratic values than they permitted themselves when they still had to compete with the Communist powers for an image of liberty; in the age of 'anti-terrorism', anything to endow the cowed mass with an illusion of protection or integrity against the phantasmal threat is justified as de facto 'democratic'). For example the previous Prime Minister of the U.K. passed laws giving police powers to apply for court orders to limit the "harmful activities" of individuals creating a "threat to the functioning of democracy" (more specifically citing those whose activities aim at a "purpose of overthrowing democracy"); bans include publication on the web and social media or in print anything not submitted to the police for approval, and power to close premises where 'extremists' seek to influence others. (One could point out that these measures initially target Muslim cultural groups or others 'at risk of radicalisation', while at the same time seeing 'anti-hate' discourse already levelled against anarchists and other liberationists, as in the U.S. to designate anti-police violence, or the trial (still) pending against comrades in Belgium (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg68** for actions and propaganda against 'victimised' Eurocrats...)

However, it's important to mention one difference today: **for the first time in decades, the elite consensus over the neo-liberal strategy of capital (free trade agreements, de-regulation, etc.) which has dictated the world system politically and economically since the second Great World Slaughter appears to be crumbling.** But it's probably too soon to say where these cracks actually lead (for example, although not limited to the U.S. – the U.K. exit from the European Union being one obvious correlate – the failure to resolve this tension is perhaps personified for many by U.S. President Donald Trump, who mouths off against global trade to win votes but has yet to prove himself willing or capable of changing this very basis of U.S. wealth; and despite press and leftist alarmism – amounting to little more than a revision of the authoritarianism of the Obama presidency before him – and his proven willingness to grant the resurgent right license to target social movements, is ultimately more an expression of American white supremacist democratic traditions than 'fascism').

**This was written in the deathly silence before the wave of insurrections finally broke through to the Global North (France 2005, Greece 2008, England 2011, U.S.A. 2014, etc.)**  
Today the system must overcome more visible social crises than the '90s years that this article surely

germinates in. But we could also say that despite the legitimacy the figures of the banker, the cop and the politician have lost, **it is precisely democracy that has rejuvenated that system in country after country** via people's enchantment with the new political parties that rose from the ashes of abandoned self-organised forms coalesced during those uprisings or movements; a recuperation aided in some places by some anarchists misplaced promotion of so-called 'direct democracy' (see **'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'**). We would do well at such moments to remember how alone we stood against this democratic totalitarianism in the days before austerity or whatever other flash-points, because this is both the place referenced in this text, and the place we are returned to in the places where passing anarchist influence in moments of rupture has again waned.

Finally, we join the author/s in emphasising the falseness of the dichotomy between dictatorship and democracy; the latter has been swift to resort to welcoming the former when situations get out of hand (Franco and Pinochet, both mentioned below, both served democratic governments in militarily vanquishing rebellions before coming to power as autocrats), and comrades of countries that have transitioned from dictatorship (including but not limited to Greece, Indonesia, most of Latin America, etc.) frequently point out the continuation of one in the other; see our ending chronology...]

When one speaks of totalitarianism, thought runs immediately to a form of implacable domination that has historically been embodied in the figure of a single dictator. Hitler the *Führer* [Germany, 1934-1945], Mussolini the *Duce* [Italy, 1922-1943], Franco the *Caudillo* [Spain, 1939-1975], Stalin the Little Father [Russia, 1922-1953], Ceausescu the Leader [Romania, 1965-1989], Mao the Great Helmsman [China, 1949-1976], Pinochet the *generalissimo* [Chile, 1972-1990]; all are examples of dictators from a not too distant past that is nevertheless considered difficult to repeat. In the course of the past few years we have been experiencing the end of the era of individual dictatorship as this form of power receives nearly unanimous condemnation. And if in a few parts of the world, regimes still survive that are led by strongmen, the tendency to replace them with modern democracies is taking hold without much dispute. **The *Führer*, the *Duce* and their like have had to give up their place to somewhat disembodied, cold systems of domination, without surprise, from which the human element is almost completely banished. But a dictatorship – a totalitarian system – does not necessarily have to be led by a single individual to be**

“ “And that reminds me,” [the driver said,] “you better get out soon[...] I got orders wherever there's a family not moved out – if I have an accident – you know, get too close and cave the house in a little – well, I might get a couple of dollars. And my youngest kid never had no shoes yet.”

“I built it with my own hands. Straightened old nails to put the sheathing on. Rafters are wired to the stringers with baling wire. It's mine. I built it. You bump it down – I'll be in the window with a rifle. You even come too close and I'll pot you like a rabbit.”

“It's not me. There's nothing I can do, I'll lose my job if I don't do it. And look – suppose you kill me? They'll just hang you, but long before you're hung there'll be another guy on the tractor, and he'll bump the house down. You're not killing the right guy.”

“That's so,” said tenant said. “Who gave you orders? I'll go after him. He's the one to kill.”  
“You're wrong. He got his orders from the bank. The bank told him: 'Clear those people out or it's your job.'”

“Well, there's a president of the bank. There's a board of directors. I'll fill up the magazine of the rifle and go into the bank.”

The driver said, “Fellow was telling me the bank gets orders from the east. The orders were: 'Make the land show profit or we'll close you up.'”

“But where does it stop? Who can we shoot? I don't aim to starve to death before I kill the man that's starving me.”

“I don't know. Maybe there's nobody to shoot. Maybe the thing isn't men at all. Maybe, like you said, the property's doing it. Anyway, I told you my orders.”

“I got to figure,” the tenant said. “We all got to figure. There's some way to stop this. It's not like lightning or earthquakes. We've got a bad thing made by men, and by God that's something we can change.” The tenant sat in his doorway, and the driver thundered his engine and started off, tracks falling and curving, harrows combing, and the phalli of the seeder slipping into the ground.

Across the door-yard the tractor cut, and the hard, foot-beaten ground was seeded field, and the tractor cut through again; the uncut space was ten feet wide. And back he came. The iron guard bit into the house-corner, crumbled the wall, and wrenched the little house from its foundation so that it fell side-ways, crushed like a bug. And the driver was goggled and a rubber mask covered his nose and mouth. The tractor cut a straight line on, and the air and the ground vibrated with its thunder.

The tenant man stared after it, his rifle in his hand. His wife was beside him, and the quiet children behind. And all of them stared after the tractor.”

– *The Grapes of Wrath*

**considered such.** One can consider any regime in which power is concentrated absolutely into the hands of a group of people who, thus, come to have control over all aspects of everyone's existence to be such. From this one can deduce that the most important element in a totalitarian system is not so much who holds the power as **how it is exercised**. It does not matter what reasons such a system adopts to justify absolute control, whether racial purity or the development of markets. It isn't even particularly important whether control is secured violently through the presence of tanks in the street or gently by means of media anesthesia. It is the inexorable application of this control to all aspects of life that counts, the fact that it leaves no loophole, it gives no possibility of escape.

**Thus, democracy itself is also a form of dictatorship – certainly less obvious, but not for this less effective, quite the contrary – that must impose its values in every field on all individuals and social classes for its own self-preservation.** From this perspective, many consider it the most perfect totalizing system. The main reason that it has succeeded in replacing the old and obsolete forms of power is that it is not merely one of the various forms power can assume; democracy corresponds to the very essence of capitalism, to the normal functioning of market society in its expansion. Within the marketplace, social classes don't exist; there are only "free and equal" consumers. This "freedom" and "equality" covers a basic role in the gathering of consensus, that consensus which represents the highest virtue of the democratic system in the eyes of its supporters.

In fact, the classic totalitarian regimes are based on an exercise of violence that is, paradoxically, a profound sign of weakness. The conditions of life that are imposed are intolerable – everyone knows this – and it is up to the forces for the maintenance of order to materially obstruct the realization of a different life, the possibility of which still remains as the conscious aspiration of the majority of people. **On the other hand, in democratic systems the very possibility of a different life is to be eradicated.** To maintain order, the democratic state does not take out its

cudgels except under very specific circumstances; rather it uses the organs of information. These don't leave bruises on the skin, but preventatively nullify all awareness, extinguish every desire, placate every tension; the individual dissolves and her *[sic]* alienation from the world becomes irreconcilable.

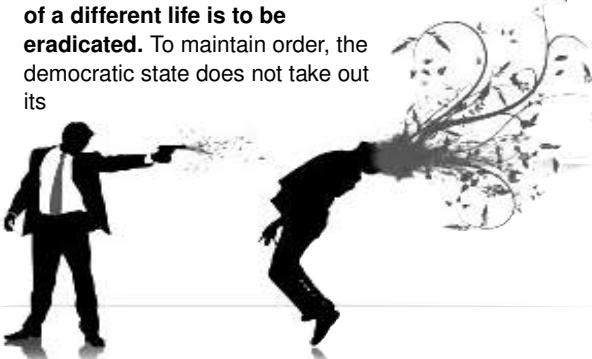
Freedom is simply self-determination. It is the choice each individual makes concerning his existence and the world in which she lives. But a choice in a situation in which there is nothing to choose, because conditions determined by others limit the situation, is a choice only in name. Thus, a regime that represses challenges with blood is denounced as totalitarian; it hinders different choices. But what can one say about a regime in which no significant social tumult ever breaks out, a regime that has nothing to hinder because it does not even provide for the possibility of different choices. As someone has said, "*The most perfect police state has no need for police.*" A decisive aspect of the totalitarian form – the single party – can express itself completely now even within the western political systems.

Contemporary political analysts themselves are forced to admit that when one takes the economic bonds and the increasingly clear agreement on the principles of the market economy between the left and the right into account, the discourse and the programs of the great parties overlap more and more. Instead of presenting objectives that obviously differ from one another, developed through the use of opinion polls, the great governing parties have reached the point where they no longer divide on specific objectives... These considerations no longer succeed in rousing amazement, expressing a situation that has in fact become familiar. Among the apologists for the totalitarianism of the market, this familiarity loses all shame and becomes inescapable. In his last book celebrating global capitalism, journalist Thomas Friedman – columnist for the New York Times, winner of two Pulitzer Prizes – does not hide his satisfaction in establishing that political choice has been reduced to Pepsi against Coca Cola – slight nuances of taste, slight political variants, but never any deviation from the respected assumption of the rules of gold, those of the main street, the multiplicity of parties, which has been proclaimed as a sure sign of democratic health because it supposedly guarantees the possibility of choice, thence of "freedom", is seen ever more clearly for what it is: a competition between identical things.

**Today more than ever before, politics is action as an end in itself, particularly in its parliamentary form in which the shuffling of people and things serves no other purpose than that of disguising not only the uselessness of the work, but also its essential unity. The numerous political parties that throng into the parliament today are the "natural" heirs of the different factions that battled inside the old single dictatorial party. As in the case of the factions, the various parties share the same vision of the world, the same values, the same methods. Only the details differentiate them.**

Totalitarianism has met with almost universal condemnation everywhere, and yet every day we can see how democracy is just another form of totalitarianism. And one of the worst. A modern democracy is rarely shaken by revolt. **Democracy has taken hold as the political system most impermeable to the risk of revolt.** Even if such a revolt managed to emerge, it would have difficulty fueling the passions of individuals since it no longer has a role in the collective imagination. And this still doesn't take into account that even in such a hopeful case, the wrath generated would not find anyone against which to direct itself, precisely because in democratic systems power is not embodied in a human being, but is represented by an entire social system.

It goes without saying that the parliamentary and union institutions never furnish the governed individuals with adequate means for making their claims, while dissatisfaction – even when generalized – leads in the best of cases to the formation of some current of opposition. When there is not a figure in a position to polarize the totality of the opposition against itself in an enduring manner – precisely when there is no dictator – in a situation where a governing functionary becomes the object of a widespread challenge, the normal interplay of institutions can even act to eliminate him *[sic]* in order to mollify at least a part of the discontent. The lack of a king whose head can be cut off, of a strong authoritarian figure capable of drawing popular hatred onto itself, in other words of someone to whom we can attribute the responsibility for the exercise of power, constitutes the genuine great bulwark in defense of democratic totalitarianism. In the old and caricatured dictatorships, power had the moustache of Hitler or the jaw of Mussolini, and it could be seen goose-stepping in the street or wearing the black shirt. But today



in the modern democracies, **who is power?** And the aim of the question is not to identify the particular people who exercise power, which is still possible on some level, but to attribute the responsibility for the existence that we lead to them.

Over and over again it is said that today there is a single social system managed by people who are mere cogs in a machine, petty functionaries who cover most administrative roles. The very concept of responsibility comes to lose all meaning. Responsibility is the possibility of foreseeing the effects of one's behavior and changing this on the basis of such foresightedness. But the cog in a machine has no foresight; it has no need of foresight; it can never do anything but spin. Therefore, it is no longer possible to attribute the fault for an action to anyone, even if the action was most aberrant.

Let's look at an example taken from the realm of what is commonly called "judicial errors". Consider a man who has been sentenced to prison for life but actually did not commit the crime of which he was accused. He is placed under investigation, arrested, incarcerated, tried, sentenced and kept segregated for the rest of his life. Who is responsible for all this? In the old totalitarian systems, the response was much too simple. Everyone would have seen the unfortunate fellow dragged away, condemned and locked up by the hired thugs of the dictator who would have been considered responsible for the injustice perpetrated. In modern democracies, on the other hand, no one is held responsible. The police officer who arrested him is not responsible since he was limited to carrying out orders from someone else. Nor can we blame the prosecutor although he asks for the sentence, because he does not decree it; this is done by someone else. Even the judges are not at fault since they have to make a decision on the basis of evidence presented to them by someone else and then apply the provisions of a penal code compiled by someone else. Finally, one cannot blame the guard, who as the last link in this chain, is certain to have a clean conscience unlike someone else. Yet that man finds himself there in prison, and it is his body that is enclosed behind bars, not that of someone else. Thus, in the dictatorships that once existed the fact that power was embodied in one man made him responsible along with his underlings, but in modern democracy the distribution of power through out the social apparatus removes responsibility from everyone without distinction.

This exists as a social reality that is quite tangible, concrete and above all tragic. It is able to grind up human life without anyone being blamed. And if this happens when human responsibility is indisputable, we



(Not-so-wild)fires rage this September across North America's Pacific coast

can imagine what would happen when other factors can be planned.

Here is another example. Numerous "experts" have had to agree that the origins of the huge storms that periodically strike the coasts of the United States and eastern Asia are undoubtedly found in climactic changes brought about by human activity. On the other hand, in the face of the series of earthquakes that shook the entire planet in the summer of 1999, the experts thought it good to reassure public opinion that in this case at least the responsibility lies elsewhere, in the unfathomable workings of nature. This may be true, but whatever they say about the causes, they fail to consider the effects of these cataclysms. If seismic tremors escape human control, we are facing a natural fact in which we are unable to intervene and to which we can only submit; but when these tremors destroy the modern cities of Greece causing deaths and injuries while leaving the acropoli intact, then we are facing a social question. To build houses, apartments, entire cities, using building techniques and city planning projects intended to bring the highest level of economic profit and social control without considering even the most elementary safety precautions cannot be considered among the inborn human characteristics.

**In the end, who is responsible for the thousands of deaths on the job? Who is at fault for poisoning nature? Who do we hold accountable for the wars, the massacres, the deaths of millions of people? Is it possible to exit from this dense fog?**

In a famous essay entitled "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship", which took a polemic that arose from the trial of Nazi Adolf Eichmann as its starting point, Hannah Arendt recalled that the principle argument of the defense was that Eichmann had been a mere cog, but regardless of whether the defendant is incidentally a functionary, he is in fact accused because **a functionary remains a human individual**. In order to clear the field of a confusionism that could only serve self-interest, the writer invites one to

consider the functioning of wheels and cogs as a global support to a collective undertaking, rather than to speak in the customary manner of obedience to leaders. In this light one would never have to ask those who collaborated and obeyed "why did you obey?" but "why did you give support?" If these observations don't minimally shake up the conscience of anyone who finds themselves reading them today, naturally it is because they refer to persons who served a dictatorship of the classical type. Under Nazism – Hannah Arendt tells us – all those who collaborated with the regime were equally responsible. When power is embodied in one man, the Man himself is responsible for it as well as the "black shirt", as the partisans who shot the adolescent "black shirts" without posing themselves too many ethical questions well knew. On the other hand, when power has no name or surname, no single person is more responsible than any other. Thus, the very people who justify the shooting of a 16-year-old "black shirt" are horrified, at the same time, by the violent death of a personage of the democratic state.

But were these young "black shirts" of yesterday actually more responsible than the president of the United States for rendering our existence intolerable? **We can't get rid of the thought that personal responsibility persists not only under the Nazi dictatorship but under the democratic one as well. It doesn't nullify the responsibility of its functionaries. If it dilutes this responsibility, it does so to disguise it, to render it impalpable, invisible to our eyes.** In the threadbare dialogue with which dominant thought has entertained itself for decades now, responsibility is said



14.06.17, London, U.K.: Grenfell flats, after repeated legal threats to the residents who warned likelihood of fire

to have gone through the same shipwreck that is supposed to have made History, Meaning, Reality sink forever. All one needs to do is stop listening to this chattering for a moment and here is what one would see: these alleged shipwrecks *that never were such* reappearing.

**All discourse that sets out to compare human life to the functioning of a machine, in that unrelenting process of making the individual disappear, omits one thing: individuals are not cogs, they are human beings.** They were human animals under the Nazi dictatorship and are such under that of the democratic state as well. The difference between a cog – which is a mere piece of metal – and a human being should be evident. A person is always in a position to discern and choose. If this is not so now, if one has indeed become a mere cog, this would be further confirmation of the totalizing and totalitarian reality in which we find ourselves unable to live, and of the urgent necessity of its overthrow. In any case, the social system in which we live is not an inherent aspect of the world; it is a historical project. We are not free to decide whether or not we are born into it, **but we can decide whether and how to live with it.** From the moment we accept taking on one of its roles, participating in its administration, we accept the responsibilities implicit in this. Being easily interchangeable particles of a very complex system does not free us from our responsibilities, because we could have chosen to refuse that system. Thus, even in this case one cannot excuse herself by saying that he only obeyed, that she only followed the current, that he only did what everyone else did. Because before obeying, before following the current, before imitating others, a human being poses herself, must pose himself, a question: would I consider it appropriate to do this? And then she must answer himself. Just like the Germans of whom Hannah Arendt spoke – we too are in the situation of having to choose whether to give our support or at least our consent to this social organization or not. Once again choice comes into play. In the myth of Er, Plato makes the destiny of each person depend on the choice each one makes of their model for life: “There was nothing necessarily preordained in life because each person had to change according to the choice she made.” Now, we can choose to give our contribution to the maintenance of this world. Or else we can choose to withhold it. In either case, we make a choice for which we alone are responsible, not someone else. If it is true that “the original choice is always present in each subsequent choice”, then we must also know how to accept the consequences of our actions. All of us, no-one excluded.

“Democracy is not something supernatural, something far from our selves. It’s our daily life. It’s the way we describe the cultural poverty of the modern mega-cities; the emptiness, the poverty, the

loneliness, the alienation. Today, democracy receives proud laudations by ‘inflated’ politicians, ‘firm’ prosecutors, ‘uncorrupted’ cops, ‘truth-loving’ journalists, ‘charity activist’ wealth owners.

And is now the time that we have to strip democracy from its ‘sanctity’ and throw it where it deserves: in the cesspool of history. And it’s now that we have to finish with this alienation that submits subconsciously the illusions – the illusion of the ‘most perfect’ regime in history, the illusion of normality, equality and peace.”

– December 6th (see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg98)

“Carl Schmitt, the influential German political theorist, jurist, and unrepentant Nazi whose work

was later taken up by the neoliberals at the University of Chicago, said that government was not a monopoly on violence, but a monopoly on decision. This seems true. In fact, the State permits and depends on private violence in the form of patriarchy, racism, employment conditions, fascist street gangs, and so on, in order to maintain itself. What the State requires, in order to maintain power,

is the prerogative to decide, in increasingly minuscule spheres of life, what is allowed and what isn’t; to decide the course of the country and *post facto* legitimate and regulate the initiatives taken by

the capitalists. And when some social power contests the reigning order, the State must be involved in the resolution. The pacifists are wrong when they say that violence is the government’s strong suit. If they ruled through violence they

would never have legitimacy. In fact, the government’s strong suit is communication. It is to occupy the central position, the role of mediator and protagonist, in any decision. It will make itself

feared if it has to, but above all it survives by making itself heard and making itself necessary, to the point where people cannot imagine a solution to

a social problem that is not tailored first and foremost to the needs of state. This is exactly why [anarchists] refuse to make demands. We will not dialogue with the State, we will not sit down to chat with Capital. We will not tell them what we want because they already know: we want them to die. [...] The police know that we propose solutions to their violence because they use the literature seized from our homes as evidence in the trials against us. The politicians know we envision a world without

their authority because we talk about it in the communiques that accompany the bombs placed outside their houses. The journalists know we criticize their control of culture and information because they fancy themselves investigators and we put these texts for free on the internet. And what they all know is precisely what they refuse to say in those embarrassing moments when they must admit that we exist: they have no place in our future. We

are going to destroy them.”

– *The Logic of Not Demanding*

## DEMOCRACY'S DISCONTENTS

**19.11.17, Viña del Mar, Chile:** *Street blockade on the voting day for the first round in the Presidential Elections.* “Each Forest cut, each Lake and River that dries, each Hill devastated, every species that is extinct; each one of the *Cabros* that falls into the trap, who are repressed and beaten by the police and live through the abyss that is prison; every *Peñi* and *Lamgien* beaten, tortured and killed in Wallmapu [ed. – see *We Can Be Worse Still*]; each Woman abused by a priest, each Child violated and killed in the youth detention centres... each, and more of these same miseries that are endorsed by the violence and the very existence of the state, they are also the miseries that are guaranteed to those who believe in and perpetuate democracy.”

**18.10.17, Santiago de Compostela, Spain:** *An early-morning molotov is launched against the residence of the president of the Xunta de Galicia, currently occupied by the president of the PP (ruling Popular Party, directly set up by the fascist regime during the transition to democracy to retain the old guard).* The same night, three ATMs are also torched, as is another one dawn the following day. The first wave of attacks coincides with a day called in all Galicia to demonstrations about the recent wave of over 50 concurrent fires in the Galician and Asturian mountains (the worst for years in these ‘green deserts’ of eucalyptus/pine monoculture forestry, itself already an industrial disaster and plan of Franco’s regime to turn the region’s ecology into a sacrifice zone). The PP maintain very close ties with the paper-pulping company ENCE, the main responsible for much of the Iberian Northwest monoculture; including the marriage of the much-hated ENCE plant in Pontevedra’s director to the Deputy Director General of Environmental Coordination of the Department of Environment, Territory and Infrastructure of the Xunta de Galicia. This PP president had just extended the life of the ENCE plant another 60 years...

**July 2016, Sydney, Australia:** “Over the past two months some anarchists around Sydney mounted a campaign against politics and the democratic process. This election takes place in a period of historic disillusionment with the political spectacle and the politicians who represent it, and never before have so many parties been on offer, to direct that mistrust back into the electoral process. We reject this process in its entirety. Elections are a charade to confuse us about where power lies, and how things can be

changed. With the following petty acts of anti-political sabotage, we draw a line. Thousands of anti-electoral posters were pasted up throughout Sydney. Hundreds of anti-political slogans were painted across the city. A dozen banners were tied to highway overpasses. Political advertising of every party was vandalised, or taken down and later burnt. Party activists caught spreading political propaganda were confronted, harassed and sometimes relieved of their material. Unlike every political party we do not measure success based on opinion polls or ballots."

**18.06.13, Paris, France:** "A week after the murder of a comrade<sup>[\*]</sup> in Paris by fascists, a week after the ever-so-democratic police raid [against undocumented people] in Barbès... a bank ATM burned[,] the window of the Pré St-Gervais Socialist Party section shattered by blows, [the headquarters of the Left Front] completely covered with tags. [...] Neither democracy nor fascism!"

\* ed. – Clément Méric, militant syndicalist and anti-fascist, beaten to death by two neo-nazis

**31.03.13, Aceh Tamiang, Indonesia:** "[W]e burned down 3 buildings owned by the Major of Aceh Tamiang, Hamdan Sati. [...] We have no citizenship because we are borderless. We are the angry ones who light the fire of freedom."

**17.06.12, Athens, Greece:** *In the early evening of the election day, around ten people enter a polling station and burn the ballot box. Two police officers guarding the polling station are attacked and have to be taken to hospital.*  
"Everything around us seems to unwind in coercive binaries: memorandum/anti-memorandum, drachma/euro, fascism/anti-fascism. [...] Yet we don't for a moment forget the only real binary: Revolution or consistency with the existent. [The 1,000ml of petrol that we placed in the ballot box] are our 1,000 votes, they are our 1,000 challenges in an unpacifiable war."

**30.05.12, Bristol, U.K.:** *Broken windows, paint-bombs and tags for the Bristol Conservative Association.* "Brand A, or Brand B, Pepsi or Cola, Labour or Conservative, we are allowed to chose anything we want as long as it's within the pre-written guidelines of capitalism, the state, and the myth of democracy."

**21.05.12, Genoa, Italy:** *A device blows up in a skip next to the polling station in Rapallo, two cop cars are torched in the same area outside the police HQ, and more skips were burned outside another polling station.*

**24.10.11, Montevideo, Uruguay:** *Arson on the seat of the Communist Party;* "we decided to hit the democracy/dictatorship of the progressive government. [...] Against the milicos of dictatorship and the squaddies of democracy!"<sup>[\*\*]</sup>  
\* transl. – The democratic regime had granted the former dictatorship amnesty.

**09.01.10, Athens, Greece:** *Bombing outside the Greek parliament.* "Democracy's new social contract is ratified across western capitals: in-between confiscated cars, endless queues forming outside social security services, the torturing take place inside police stations, new cell phone special offers, flat-screen TVs, unemployment benefits, psychological problems and loneliness, upsurges of nationalist pride and unpaid loan installments. And most importantly, non of this was forced upon anyone, nor was it carried by the order of some junta generals. [...] This is why we claim that democracy is the technique and the ability of power not to be understood as oppression."

# VEGANISM: WHY NOT

## – an anarchist perspective



Proponents of an ideology typically fail to distinguish between those who have not yet encountered the new ideas they offer, and those who have absorbed these ideas and moved on. The very point of an ideology is that you're not meant to move on from it; however every ideology, at the very best, has only been a resting point in an onward theoretical journey.

Anarchism, I would argue (perhaps simply because I don't wish to move on from it), is more a body of thought, a legacy and tradition of revolt aiming towards total freedom from all coercive authority. Its various ideologies – syndicalism, primitivism – have constituted resting points, while a few guiding principles have remained permanent, but by no means ahistorical.

**It would be a mistake to critique veganism as an ideology, or as a body of thought and tradition of practice, because there do not even exist any vague guiding principles that all or nearly all vegans share. A great many vegans do not believe it is absolutely wrong to kill other animals for food, and an increasing number do not believe in animal liberation in any radical sense of the term.**

Veganism can only be fairly critiqued as an intersectionality, a minimal practice of abstinence that for a variety of reasons very different people choose to identify as an important common ground. For many, the motive is social, to signal belonging to a group or completion of a trend, justified on the grounds of health or ethics. For others, the motive is revolutionary, to develop that minimal practice of abstinence into a maximal practice that might seek, among other things, animal rights, animal liberation, or the abolition of all domination and exploitation.

As such, this critique of veganism is not at all directed against particular diets or

lifestyles that could be described as vegan. It is rather directed at the very intersectionality that people choose to identify as an important common ground – based on the argument that there actually is no common ground there – and at the motives and beliefs behind that identification.

### The New Thing

The rate at which veganism is being promoted by hipsters,

NGOs, and – increasingly – businesses, leaves no room for doubt that capitalism, the perennial opponent of animal liberation, to say the least, has become the new best friend of veganism. Of course, capitalism also buddied up with the feminist movement, and only the stupidest anarchists took that as a reason not to fight patriarchy. However, the fight against patriarchy and the feminist movement are not necessarily the same thing; there have also been intelligent critiques of particular feminist movements as the best form of struggle against patriarchy, which, regardless of their validity, have made for healthy debate. Likewise, fighting the exploitation of animals and veganism are not the same thing, and the question of whether the latter is useful for the former is also necessary to debate.

It is vital to note that green capitalism is becoming the predominant strategy to allow Capital to survive what may be the biggest crisis it has ever created [ed. – see *New Technologies, Extraterrestrial Exploitation & the Future of Capitalism*].

Veganism plays a demonstrable role in greening capitalism. Every vegan who has ever spouted a statistic about the amount of water used to produce a pound of beef or the amount of methane emitted by the world's sheep is actively supporting capitalism by participating in a great smoke screen which hides the true nature of how the present economic system actually functions. **All talk of efficiency is coming out of the mouth of Capital itself.**

Historically, capitalism has needed an ever growing population, although in the future it may find a way out of this obligation. But for the meantime, capitalists must find a way to feed a larger population on less, and in the wealthy metropolis, veganism provides the perfect solution<sup>[1]</sup>.

As stated in the introduction, veganism in its totality is not an ideology or a tradition of struggle; it only exists as these things for a minority of those who identify as vegans. In its totality, veganism is only the identity

of those who choose it. **Because veganism exists as a chosen common ground between those who struggle for animal liberation and those who are actively working to save capitalism, not to mention to vacate any struggle they come in contact with of its radical content, it could only be justified if it inarguably were the only way to coherently live and fight for anarchist ideals. This, I will argue presently, is not the case.** (One could also counterargue that veganism is potentially useful as a common ground if it serves subversively as a sort of gateway drug into more radical politics. Given the self-evident facts that more people are turned away by veganism than attracted to it, and that those who are attracted to it tend to be wealthier and hipper, veganism makes for a simultaneously uninviting and anemic gatekeeper.)

### Animal Rights

Animal rights is a common objective for those vegans whose motivations are ethical, and not only based in health or fashion. I don't know why these people hate other animals so much that they would wish rights on them, but I imagine their malice stems from an ignorance of the meaning of rights, of the policing of living relations in a legal framework, of the democratic project [ed. – see '**The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'**]. Because a propensity towards democracy is one of the most common strategic and theoretical faults among anarchists at this time, one must again skeptically question the selection of this common ground that breeds so many vices. Because the animal rights agenda is so naïve and reformist, I will subsequently focus on the framework of animal liberation, in an attempt to avoid creating an easy-to-demolish strawman.

### Thou Shalt Not Kill

One of multiple ethical justifications for veganism argues that a vegan lifestyle is the only coherent realization of the moral truth that it is wrong to kill other animals. If the moral prohibition against killing is not coming directly from pacifism or Christianity, it can only base itself on an analogy with the fundamental anarchist prohibition against domination: killing is a form of domination, and thus it is contrary to anarchism, except possibly in cases of self-defense. **The analogy is a flagrantly false one.** Though Authority has long flaunted its legitimate ability to kill, annihilation of its subjects has always been a last resort, and this last resort is always taken in order to educate the living. Domination is only successful when the subject is kept alive so its activity can be disciplined and exploited: there's got to be something to dominate.

There's nothing un-anarchist about killing a king, because kings are not a type of

"In some manner or another all forms of life eat some other living thing and then, in turn, are eaten by someone else. Our deaths are usually sad for ourselves but, as Juan Matus [ed. – of the Yaqui; see **Return Fire** vol.3 pg59] points out so well, our deaths are also gifts for someone else, if only for micro-organisms. Human beings, for example, stalk and eat all manner of plants, animals and birds, but we in turn are hunted and eaten by other living animals as well as by bacteria and other tiny living things. Ultimately, of course, worms, bugs and plants will feed upon our bodies and help [the earth] to digest us. [Earth's surface] is largely comprised of the transformed bodies of our relatives who have been dying for millions of years. "Soil fertility" is, in large part, nothing but a measure of the extent to which a particular bit of ground is saturated with our dead ancestors and relatives. Death, then, is a necessary part of life. [...] Killing is a serious business and it requires spiritual preparation. Moreover, one should feel the pain and sorrow of killing a brother or sister, whether it is a weed, a tree or a deer. If one does not feel that pain, one has become brutalized and "sick." " – Jack D. Forbes

people whom anarchists wish to dominate at the end of the day. Rather, kings and other authorities constitute a political project of domination, and killing them is a rejection of their project, a demonstration that their control is imperfect, and an invitation to more acts of rebellion and disorder that will end, if successful, not with more subjects, but with no subjects, and therefore no domination.

Killing need not be an act of negation, either. It can also be the foundation of a relationship. The lion is not the king of the jungle (nor is it even a typical member of a jungle ecosystem, to get pedantic). The predator does not dominate the prey, nor does it negate them. It enters into a relationship with them, and this relationship is mutual – or in other words, of a sort that anarchists should find interesting and potentially inspiring. Many animal liberationists have human exceptionalism so ingrained, they actually reproduce the -ism they are combating (this at least they would have in common with other identity politicians). If human morality must stand above natural relations such as the one between predator and prey, then it is hypocrisy to talk of speciesism; we could only talk of salvation. And if we then shift the terrain of the argument to point out that the natural relation of predator and prey is absent in industrial food production, we would be dishonest to not also admit that we have no coherent moral qualm against killing for food, merely a contextual rejection of killing as an industry. But this would make us luddites at heart, not vegans.

Speaking from the gut for a moment, I find the moral against killing to be utterly repulsive. I think it's a disgusting disconnection from the natural world and our animal selves. Killing can be a beautiful thing. It can also be a tool in the service of domination. It is not simply and inherently one or the other.

A prohibition against killing seems to be just the idea of rights in disguise. The right to life is meaningless without a political authority to enforce it and to engage in the

project of engineering the very meaning of life. A right to life could also be safeguarded by a shared community ethos, but such a community determination would be powerless against the realities of nature (unlike the State, which has the capacity to reengineer nature). And nature knows no rights; once it gives us life, it only guarantees us the certainty of death. The Western tragic ideal, which is inextricable from the capitalist war against nature, presents death as a bad thing, and apparently so do some vegans, but to the rest of us, this only appears as philosophical immaturity.

One could, in counterargument, make a distinction between death by natural causes and death by killing, but this only increases a separation between humans and other animal species. **If human ethics and the behavior of other animals exist in completely separate spheres, then it becomes impossible to talk about animal liberation without "liberation" taking on an entirely Christian or colonial meaning (such as the "liberation of Iraq").** If a human killing for food is not natural, then we have nothing in common with other animals, in which case the only honest vegan discourse would be one of "charity towards defenseless animals." Of course, "natural" is a sophistic and often manipulated category anyways [ed. – see **Return Fire** vol.4 pg92], but let's remember that this line of argument begins with a vegan attempt to separate "natural" and "cultural" forms of eating.

Having thus alienated us from nature, a vegan could make the irrefutable argument that we have the choice whether or not to kill other animals for food, but this reasoning is circular, resting again on the assumption that killing other animals is wrong and should be avoided if possible. (They may tack on a multicultural [ed. – see **Fraud, Fantasy & Fiction in Environmental Writing/The Invention of the Tribe**'], demeaning, and victimistic exception for hunter-gatherers, poor people with limited food access, and others who "don't have a choice"). It would be more logically coherent to argue, also irrefutably,

that eating anything is a choice, and given human involvement in so many world problems, we should stop eating altogether.

**Which brings up the question of eating plants.** It's unfortunate that so many facetious jackasses, when they first hear about this weird thing called vegetarianism, think they're being so clever when they ask why it's okay to eat plants if it's not okay to eat animals, because there is actually an important point to be made here.

The consensus view on why it's okay to eat plants and not animals is because plants do not have central nervous systems (although neither do several members of the animal kingdom) and therefore can feel no pain. There are a number of things wrong with this argument. First of all, it is not falsifiable and not empirical (in the best possible sense of this term) to assert that plants do not feel. A great many cultures that have an infinitely better track record – than the consumer culture that birthed veganism – in living as a respectful part of their ecosystem and not exploiting animals insist that all living things have personhood [ed. – including much beyond Western concepts of living/dead; see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg39]. And within the skeptical and mechanistic confines of Western science, there are also a number of indications, on the level of organic electrical activity for example, that plants interact with their environment in a way that could encompass feeling. They inarguably display rejection or attraction to different stimuli, depending on the consequence of those stimuli for their wellbeing.

On the other hand, if a complex central nervous system is the sole basis, in human beings, for the capacity to feel pain, there are a great many animals with such simple nervous systems that it would be hard to believe they could feel anything more than attraction or repulsion to different stimuli. Exactly why a living being should be valued based on what comes down to its supposed similarity to human beings is something that vegans should have to explain.

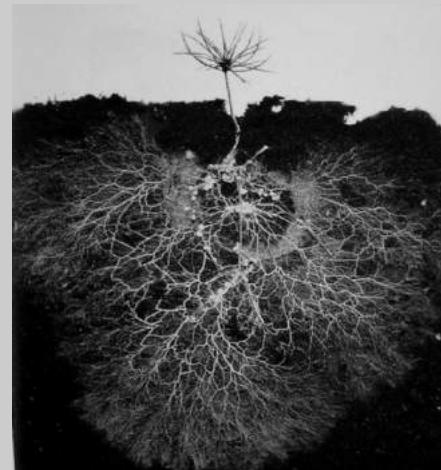
If it is domination to kill, why do we respect animals and not plants? If it is wrong to cause pain, why do we give animals the benefit of the doubt, and give other living things the short shrift when in neither case is it certain if or what they feel? **Is our only criterion their similarity to us?** Could the advanced ethical arguments of veganism be little more complex than those PETA posters that always champion cute puppies, and never crabs or cockroaches?

In any case, the downward extension of the right not to feel pain to those creatures most similar to ourselves (but only similar to us in a mechanical understanding of ourselves) closely mirrors the extension of

democratic rights from an elite to the majority of humankind. This extension was not a gradual sequence of delayed charity but a violent process that incorporated the new citizens into the rationalistic Cartesian<sup>[2]</sup> conception of man [ed. – see *'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'*]; rights were a trojan horse for a more detailed domination. Vegan morality, in other words, constitutes another alienation from nature; to prevent killing or the infliction of pain, human society would have to remove all remnants of ecosystem relations from our food production, producing human and natural spheres that ideally do not touch at all.

This alienation is most obvious in the bizarre aversion to pain expressed by some ethical vegans. Rather than constructing a sensible ethical framework, in which it is simply wrong to lock up another living thing or to enforce coercive non-reciprocal relationships with other living things, the veganism which is based on a prohibition of killing permits the contradiction of killing plants by elaborating an immorality of the causing of pain. (As a side note regarding non-reciprocal relationships, it is important to recognize the centrality of coercion in order to distinguish between non-reciprocal Authority and non-reciprocal parasites, the latter inhabiting an important ecosystemic niche).

I find it hard to understand someone who does not comprehend that pain is natural, necessary, and good. **When we inflict pain on others, our faculties of sympathy provoke a conflict within us, and such conflict is also good, because it makes us think and question what we're doing, whether it's necessary, and whether there's also an element of the beautiful in it. Evolving to eat animals and also to feel sympathy, our biology saddles us with a choice. Either we form an intimate relationship with that which we eat, understand it as a privilege to accompany the other creature in its last moments, and look forward to the day when we will also be killed and eaten; or we avoid this difficult process by forming an ideology so we know that what we are doing, a priori, is right, and therefore not a**



"There is no difference [between plants and animals in terms of their aliveness]. That we think there is is a direct result of our schooling, which has taught us inaccurate maps of the reality around us. Plants have as sophisticated a neural network as most animals, in some instances their neural networks dwarf our own. We are the only culture in the history of the world that has forgotten this. To think that plants are sentient, as we are sentient, is a huge step. For many people taking the next step and understanding that places also contain livingness, that they extend meanings outward to us is even harder. Still, all of us have walked into a restaurant with a friend and suddenly stopped and said, *"This place feels funny, let's leave."* If we extend that feeling capacity outwardly into the wild of the world we immediately feel the livingness and intelligence of place. All cultures prior to the emergence of Christianity and Islam understood this. Once we reclaim that understanding it is much harder to treat the outside world carelessly, for we know, deep within ourselves, that it is as alive as we are alive and that caring that we feel interferes with careless attitudes and behaviors. [M]ost of us have been trained to see the plant world as a simple, and unintelligent background to the human world. It takes many years to escape that training, still it proceeds in slow increments. The first step is to allow the sense of wonder we had as children to return, to let ourselves feel the touch of the world upon us and to follow its lead. It begins with simple things such as coming upon a magnificent old growth tree in a forest and being overcome with the feeling that it engenders in us." – Stephen Harrod Buhner

**cause for conflict, sympathy, or doubt.** The depersonalization and degradation of animals that accompanies ideas of human supremacy is one such ideology that accomplishes an end run around emotional conflict. Veganism, which extends human supremacy downwards to include the whole of the animal kingdom and depersonalizes the rest of the natural world, is another. With both the loud, proud meat-eaters and the vegans, the effect is the same: *to not have to feel sympathy or respect for the living beings which you must kill in order to survive.*

## From Boycott to Insurrection

A great many vegans do not believe that it is fundamentally wrong to kill for food, but they understand the shamefulness of locking living beings up in cages, and therefore of the meat industry. As long as the meat industry exists, they want no part of it. Maybe they see their veganism as a boycott of the industry, which, along with other tactics, will bring it down, or maybe it is simply a coherent emotional response. More likely to approve of freeganism<sup>[3]</sup>, this type of vegan will say that they might eat meat if they lived in a healthy, ecologically sustainable society, but within industrial society they consider it impermissible. It is important to distinguish between these two types of radical vegans – those who think it is absolutely wrong to eat meat and those who think it is situationally wrong, leaving aside for now non-evangelical vegans who see veganism as a choice befitting their particular struggle – because the moral vegans will often respond to criticisms of vegan ethics with arguments based on the tenets of situational vegans, confusing the distinction between the specific context they use rhetorically, and the absolute ethics they use it to defend. For example, a typical response to the first version of this article deliberately conflated the two arguments, dodging the ethical criticism of veganism by falsely painting it as an ethical apology for the factory system of food production. As can clearly be seen in the preceding section, the ethical criticism is based in the possibility of a healthy, ecological, non-industrial relationship with our food. In this section, the struggle against industrial food production is taken as a given, and the only criticism made against veganism in this respect regards its efficacy in challenging and undermining this industry.

While they can be counted on to be less manipulative than moral vegans, practical vegans generally obscure the true functioning of capitalism and thus hinder the struggle against animal exploitation and ecocide, two phenomena which cannot be viewed entirely separately, even though animal rights, and certain versions of animal liberation, highlight the former at the expense of the latter.

**Although it seeks to be strategic in nature, practical veganism creates a false understanding of capitalism and a false sense of moral purity or superiority, both of which are fatal to the struggle against domination.**

In the first place, true veganism is impossible for anyone who lives within capitalist society. Most fruits and vegetables are pollinated with bees or wasps, many of which are commercially farmed. A substantial proportion of fields

are fertilized with manure or slurry from industrial meat farms. The commercial alternative to this, generally, is chemical fertilizer, which constitutes mining and the destruction of the oceans: is veganism in this case any kind of step forward? (Or, to use another example, when a friend asked me to hand her her jacket, which, she self-righteously pointed out, was not made from animal skin, her sense of superiority was quickly deflated when I said, *"Here's your jacket made from petroleum products."*)

It goes further than this. Imagine a vegan vertical monopoly that produces food, from start to finish, without bees, without manure, and hell, let's pretend they even use organic fertilizers and pesticides, and don't use giant tractors that crush moles, insects, and other animal life. Only rich people would be able to afford this food, but regardless of the final price, all profit made from the buying and selling of this food represents a return on investment, a cash flow that a diverse web of banks, insurance companies, and investors turn right around and put into other industries – **the weapons industry, clothing manufacture, vivisection, adventure tourism, prosthetic devices, turkey factories, cobalt mining, student loans, it doesn't matter.**

Let's put this more concretely. Every single vegan restaurant in the world, as long as they meet the minimum definition of a restaurant (selling food) supports the meat industry, because in industrial civilization, there is no meat industry and vegetable industry, there is only Capital, expanding at the expense of everything else.

The vegan argument against stealing meat is indicative: if you steal meat, the supermarket may lose money, but they will order more meat product to replace their stock, so more meat will be consumed. However, it is the profit made by the supermarket that is reinvested primarily in food distribution of all kinds, and secondarily in all other industries imaginable. What's good for veganism, in this case – buying vegetables and not stealing meat – is good for capitalism, bad for the planet, bad for animals. Ethical consumption of any kind is a mirage. All consumption fuels Capital and hurts the planet. Stealing meat is better for animals than buying vegetables from a supermarket, but both stealing and buying are a dead end as long as we don't dismantle the industrial civilization that is destroying the Earth and exploiting or liquidating all its inhabitants.

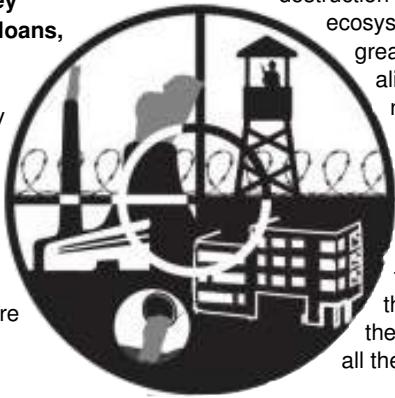
Not only is there no modern example of an effective boycott against an entire product category as opposed to a single brand, the very idea of better consumer choices

represents how environmental movements of various stripes have aided capitalism.

When the reformist environmentalists of the '80s promoted responsible consumerism (e.g. *101 Things You Can Do to Save the Planet*), they played their part in increasing domestic electricity efficiency in the US. This increase in efficiency enabled a decrease in prices, which allowed an increase in total electricity consumption, and all the accompanying consequences for the environment. Within a market economy, a decrease in meat consumption could lead to a decrease in meat prices, which would lead to a net increase in meat consumption as those segments of the population not yet won over by veganism take advantage of the drop in prices.

Some mythical vegan movement that became large enough to cause a collapse in the meat industry through boycotts and accompanying sabotage would find itself in a dead end, having promoted a change in capitalism that would allow greater efficiency in world food production, a higher world population, and the destruction of

ecosystems on a greater scale. The alienation from nature would reach its logical conclusion: most animals would be freed from their cages, but they'd be fucked all the same.



**Not only does veganism encourage an ignorance of market mechanisms, it also conflates consumption with agency and thus promotes a fundamental democratic myth.** People are held responsible for what they buy and consume, and therefore the consumer arena is portrayed as one of free choice, rather than a violently imposed role [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg87]. All the violence and domination of the capitalist system is ingrained in the role of the consumer, in every corner of a society based on the production, buying and selling of commodities. Except for the most skilled of evaders, and the inhabitants of a few remote jungle and mountain regions (all of whom base their antiauthoritarian subsistence strategies in part on hunting<sup>[4]</sup>), it is impossible to opt out of capitalism. A vegan lifestyle in no way damages capitalism, ends ecocide or animal exploitation, or severs one's material connections to even just the animal industry, given the interlaced nature of industrial society. Assuming that veganism has anything to do with animal liberation

would be like calling an anarchist a hypocrite for having a job, driving on state highways, going to a hospital, or occasionally opting to follow the law. The exploitation of animals and the destruction of the environment are hardwired into the present system. What matters is that we fight this system. What we eat and what we buy or don't buy in the meantime are choices whose only ramifications are personal.

**The nature of industrial society is completely missed when we see agency in consumer choices.** As long as we take care of ourselves and our comrades, how we survive the blackmails of capitalism is unimportant. The only thing that matters are our attacks against the existing system. Political veganism is an exercise in irrelevance.

It is no coincidence that many of those anarchists who reconquered the ability to feed themselves – rewilding, scavenging, or setting up farms – were among the first to abandon veganism. They had left consumerism behind, inasmuch as they could, and were coming in contact again with natural realities, and reciprocal relationships that don't fit into easy ethical frameworks [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol. 4 pg95].

### The Healthiest Diet

Before I point out some common vegan health misinformation, it's only fair to point out the lies on the other side. The most common scientific argument I've ever heard against the universal applicability of a vegan diet states that people of certain blood types need to eat meat in order to survive. I looked it up, and the study is thoroughly discredited, and it was flimsy to begin with. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, the dairy industry propaganda that milk is good for your bones is also false; broccoli, in fact, is much better. But a lot of research and a determination not to be suckered by fables from either side has led me to the conclusion that not everyone can be healthy on a vegan diet. Most of all, personal experience and the experiences of friends has corroborated that conclusion.

To the best of my knowledge, the following facts are solid, and rarely mentioned by those vegans who ply the supposed health advantages of their diet:

- humans evolved on an omnivorous diet;
- different people need different amounts of various nutrients, such as iron and B12;
- some people have lower or higher absorption rates of these nutrients;
- dietary pills are often an unreliable source of nutrients, not only because they are generally produced by profit-interested companies, but also because humans

evolved to absorb their nutrients from food and not from pills (in the case of iron, dietary pills and "iron-fortified" foods contain the inferior non-heme iron from plant sources);

- heme iron, which is only found in animal sources, has an absorption rate of between 20% and 35% whereas the non-heme iron found in plant sources has an absorption rate of between 2% and 20%;
- absorption rates of heme iron is always high, whereas absorption rates of non-heme iron are affected by other dietary elements (animal protein and Vitamin C raise non-heme absorption rates, soy proteins and the phytic acid found in leafy greens lowers the non-heme absorption rates);
- unabsorbed iron, whether from pills or non-heme iron, damages cell tissue and causes health problems;
- lack of iron or especially B12 can build up over time and take years to manifest in health problems, but when such problems arise they can be gravely serious;
- there are no vegan foods that are naturally high in iron;
- zinc, another important mineral, is lacking in many vegetarian diets, and is also blocked by the phytic acid in leafy greens;
- B12 is not found in plant sources, a B12 deficiency is extremely dangerous but it can take 5–20 years to manifest, and its symptoms are masked by the folic acid which abounds in vegan diets;
- vegan B12 can only be reliably gotten in certain brands of nutritional yeast, although some people's bodies reject the yeast, or in pills or artificially fortified foods, which often have low absorption rates. (For myth-busting regarding vegan foods that are supposedly high in iron, or the argument that humans are naturally vegetarian, see the appendix [ed. – omitted for lack of space, but available with the original text at [theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)].)

**It follows from the above facts that some people, provided they are extremely conscientious about their diet, can live healthily and happily on a vegan diet. A few will feel bad on such a diet from the get go. And a larger group, after a matter of years, will become increasingly unhealthy and even develop anemia or other conditions.** A friend of mine who had never accepted my arguments against veganism finally ended ten years of veganism only after her body demanded it of her. She had developed anemia, a severe shortage of B12, and depression, and was feeling so bad that she was becoming suicidal. The arrogant, cultish commentary of, "if you're not a vegan now

you never were," simply doesn't apply to her. She's someone who is extremely dedicated to animal liberation, who has put her freedom and her body on the line, who has always been conscientious about her diet. In the first few years, she did great with a vegan diet, but after long enough she caused herself health problems that she could no longer ignore. Her case is more dramatic than most, but it's probable that a lot of the time, what appears to be the loss of motivation to maintain a diet is related to the general loss of motivation that accompanies anemia or a B12 shortage. Other times it's just the case that people are listening to their bodies without realizing that's what they're doing.

Regardless, when we hear someone tell us that a vegan diet can work for anyone, and if we gave up on it it's because of a personal failing, we know in our bones and in our guts that this is just ideological authoritarianism. When we weren't eating meat, we experienced it the same way when some jerk told us we had to eat animals. Eating, ultimately, constitutes a very personal relationship. A sure way to make an enemy is to devalue their diet. Which again raises the question of the strategic common ground constituted by veganism. Looking at vegans as a whole, and at anarchists as a whole, with whom do we feel more affinity?

The supposed health benefits of veganism are not as simple as they are often presented. Many of the studies cited by vegans to their favour do not actually measure a strictly vegan diet, but mix vegans in with those who eat very little in the way of animal products (i.e. the studies will ask respondents if they eat meat "less than once a week, two or three times a week, once a day" and so on). Once there are more vegan capitalists, such studies will surely find their funding<sup>[5]</sup> (it won't be long now), but until recently, the scientific establishment hasn't been so interested in reifying veganism as a category so much as comparing relative amounts of different food groups in a diet. These studies are also affected by the fact that vegans and vegetarians tend to be more health conscious and wealthier, meaning that regardless of the meat question, they're putting higher quality food in their bodies.

The arguments about meat consumption being bad for the heart are complicated, but vegan interventions in these arguments have tended towards simplification. High cholesterol in the blood can be bad for the heart, and meat is astronomically higher in cholesterol. **However, the body is not a machine you pour ingredients into.** There is no strong connection between cholesterol in the diet and cholesterol in the blood stream. Furthermore, cholesterol is an important nutrient. Some studies have suggested that animal fats trigger

cholesterol build-up in the bloodstream, but other studies point out that the former conflate saturated fats from animal sources with trans fats, which come from processed vegetable oils and abound in many vegan diets. There is a general consensus on the harmfulness of trans fats, and a multiplicity of studies that allege some health risks and some health benefits from animal fats. What seems to be undisputable is that there are many benefits from animal fats, and all of the health risks are neutralized by sufficient physical exercise and enough fiber in the diet. On the other hand, someone who does not lead an active life and has little access to fresh food should not eat red meat, although baked, boiled, or raw fish will generally improve their health.

An undisputed fact is that in the countries with the longest life expectancy, and generally also those with high rates of heart health, people tend to eat moderate to high amounts of animal fats, but very low amounts of processed foods.

As far as the heart goes, what is most certain is that fiber is good for it. There's no point beating around the bush: meat has no fiber. But if meat is not crowding plants out of one's diet, it probably isn't bad for your heart, and no study I'm aware of has demonstrated that meat in moderate quantities is bad if it is accompanied by lots of fiber and exercise. In other words, by most accounts, a diet based on fruits, vegetables, and meat is healthier for most people than a diet based on fruits, vegetables, and grains. **But the heart is not the only organ in the body.** What I've never heard a vegan mention are the studies documenting the negative health consequences of a diet lacking animal fats, such as higher rates of depression, fatigue, and violent death. Nor do many vegan websites mention that soy is toxic when unfermented (nearly all commercial tofu, and all TVP, is unfermented). Only tempeh and authentic bean curd pass this hurdle. As for seitan, though it is not a soy product, the gluten it is made from is bad for a comparable percentage of the population as the cow milk which vegans often demonize. Soy dust is also an allergen that increases asthma rates, particularly in port cities where rainforest soy is unloaded and sent to market.

Given the moralistic weight of the concept of the "natural" [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg24**], it is no surprise that some vegans have alleged meat consumption to be unnatural for humans. The fossil record, the diets of the most closely related primates, the length of our intestines, and our ability to digest raw meat all point to an omnivorous diet going back to the beginning of the species. The specific allegations regarding evolution are debunked in detail in the appendix.

## Religious Tendencies

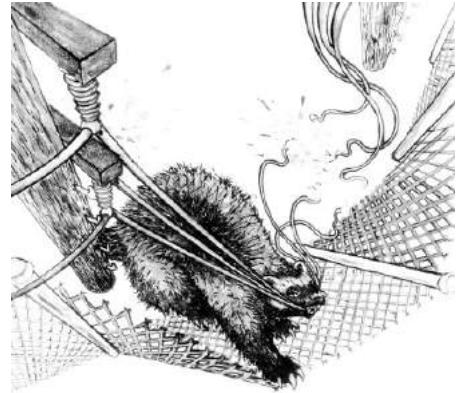
The almost systematic presence of misinformation in specifically vegan circles indicates a religious quality to veganism. Many vegans consistently formulate their lifestyle as part of a dedicated struggle for liberation, but those who are exempt from the critique of dogmatism should still be asked why they choose to create common ground with those vegans who are moralistic and manipulative.

Dogmatism is in many ways reinforced by the very construction of veganism.

Veganism creates a righteous in-group on the basis of an illusion of purity. Many of us have had the frustrating experience of arguing with vegans who go in circles, claiming that they do not support the meat industry even after they are forced to acknowledge that all industries are interconnected; we are reminded of arguing with Christians whose every proof comes back to the bible, or more precisely, their desire to believe in it. The fact that the idea of purity or non-responsibility does not square with how capitalism actually functions, and thus a vegan diet which does nothing to materially attack the structural causes of animal exploitation cannot be accepted, because the actual meaning of veganism, as such, is the embrace of the illusion of purity, the entering of the in-group.

The existence of this in-group can also be seen in the place of vegetarians on the moral hierarchy. Any well read vegan knows that, within their own logic of responsibility, a vegetarian is just as responsible as a meat eater for animal exploitation, because the production of eggs or dairy is integrated with meat production, in that morally direct way they find somehow more visible than, say, the integration of the transport industry with meat production<sup>[6]</sup>. However, the vegan who is prone to judge or proselytize (who is not every vegan, and perhaps not even the majority, but a common enough figure) will place the vegetarian who consumes milk daily higher up on the moral scale than the omnivore who eats homegrown fruits and vegetables and eats meat once a week.

Another religious feature of veganism can be found in its concept of liberation or solidarity. The vegan model is remarkably similar to the militant Christian charity of the abolitionists, given the fact that they are **speaking in the name of beings who do not speak for themselves, and building solidarity with allies who will never criticize or demand anything of them** (in the case of the abolitionists, the ideal of the mute slave was not a reality but a desired condition reinforced by the general lack of direct communication between the abolitionists in the North and the slaves in the South). Clearly, many



animals struggle against being locked up, and nature in general throws down walls and erodes boundaries. But veganism, in the minority occasions when it is accompanied by actions for animal liberation, imposes an ethical space on the animal kingdom that other animals had no hand (paw?) in creating. **Veganism refuses the possibility of learning from other animals – for me a precondition for real solidarity, but evidently not for them – by rejecting the development of an ethical framework in which we all depend on each other and sometimes eat each other, as in the animal world.**

On the vegan sanctuary farms, do they put the rescued foxes in with the rescued chickens? And if they feed the rescued dogs and cats meat instead of tofu, is it okay because they're just animals, but we've risen above that kind of behavior? Such an attitude crosses the line between ally and savior.

## Go Omnivore

There are innumerable ways for omnivorous anarchists to live coherently and formulate a diet that realizes their struggle for total liberation in their daily life. Necessarily, this great diversity of diets would have one point in common: the recognition that, because capitalism is a coercive and totalizing imposition, purity is neither desirable nor possible, thus what a person eats should not *model an ideal* but *highlight a conflict*.

This could take the form of scavenging or stealing to feed oneself. Both of these activities cultivate low intensity illegality and thus antagonism with the dominant system. And both, if they are realized within an expansive anarchist practice, suggest possibilities for elevating tactics and moving towards collective action. In the former case, one can sabotage trash compactors and other capitalist techniques of enclosing an inadvertently created commons [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg55**] (the trash). In the latter case, one can organize proletarian shopping or supermarket raids [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg25**].

In places with easier access to physical space, such as rural areas or decaying

urban areas, one can seize land to create gardens and farms and promote the self-organization of our own food supply. This tends to work better, and enable a fuller realization of anarchist ideals, if it is modeled on an ecosystem rather than a factory, which means gardens and farms with animals. Depending on the scale this could include bees, fish, chickens, goats, and more. **Such projects will pose the difficult but necessary challenge of figuring out a mutual and respectful relationship among all the species that live off the farm; planning from within rather than from above, learning how to listen to the other beings that use the farm and allow them to impact the plans; and adapting new norms for dealing with the emotional conflict we should feel when we kill other living beings.**

In places where we have contact with wilderness, we can – as many people are doing now – relearn many important skills related to feeding ourselves. If this is truly done not as a hobby but as the realization of a desire for liberation, it will necessarily entail conflict with the State and interrupt state narratives of progress [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg11] and citizenship [ed. – see *'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'*]. Where indigenous peoples continue to practice their traditional forms of food production, they almost always find themselves in conflict with the State.

**And then there's another take entirely, in which neither our diet nor anything else about our lives is purported to be consistent with our ideals. It's a possibility that veganism seems to miss entirely, and it goes like this: many of us are poor. We eat whatever we can get from the dumpster, steal when the security guard isn't looking, or buy what we can on a shitty wage. There is no dietary option in this world that satisfies us, not in the expensive eco-friendly supermarket, not in the cheap bulk section of a discount store that may or may not exist in our neighborhood, and certainly not in the permaculture farm outside of our city where the escapist hippies spend all their time feeding themselves while the world goes to shit.**

*We eat whatever food we can, sucking down the poisons of this shitty world, just to live another day and gain another opportunity to wreak destruction, to attack, to destroy a small piece of what degrades us. Cannibalism is the norm in our world. We eat our fellow animals, raised in extermination camp conditions, we wear clothes made by fellow workers in sweatshops, we breathe air so polluted it gives us cancer, we walk down streets paved with petroleum byproduct, and we're forced to spend a large part of our time*

*exploiting and betraying ourselves. None of this is a choice, just a reflection of the fact that we live in hell. Until the present social order is destroyed and all of the cages and prisons opened and razed, the only choice we acknowledge is negation. Unlike the naïve vegan novice out to change the world, we don't kid ourselves into thinking we can live our ideals. That's exactly why we're at war.*

If we seek to realize our struggle in our diet, abandoning veganism creates more possibilities for self-organization of food, a mutual relationship with our environment, bioregional flexibility and sensitivity, and anticivilizational ethics. If we reject the totality of this society or lack access to an autonomous space for maneuver, the only thing that matters is attacking the existent and sustaining ourselves in the meantime. In either case, an omnivorous diet makes sense.

### Stay Vegan

There is a major operative difference between the statements "I don't eat any animal products" and "I am vegan." All identity, on some level, is a political choice. The strategy behind the identity of veganism is poorly thought out. The practice of not eating animal products, on the other hand, may have a number of justifications.

I don't care to convince anyone to abandon a vegan lifestyle. There are plenty of good reasons to live that way, though the only ones I can think of are strictly subjective: some people feel healthier on a vegan diet; some people find it emotionally easier or more sensible to struggle for animal liberation if nothing they eat once had a face; some people do not want to put anything in their bodies that lived a tortured life, and veganism serves as an effective psychological barrier against some of the worst atrocities of capitalism, even if practically speaking it makes no difference in ending those atrocities or one's material connection to them.

What I intend with this article is to indignantly reject the much-tossed-around argument that it is incoherent for anarchists to eat meat, and morally superior for them to be vegans. I want to reach people who are dedicated to the principles behind veganism but whose bodies are suffering from the diet, to emphasize that it doesn't work for everybody. I want to attack an ethical framework I find immature and overly civilized. And most of all I want to contribute to an end to the days when veganism is the norm in collective anarchist spaces, and anyone who does not follow this lifestyle is marginalized in every social center, at every conference. There are a great many reasons against generalized veganism. There is no reason

why those of us who have already passed through veganism and out the other side should be closeted in common anarchist spaces, or treated as less dedicated in the struggle for the end of all forms of domination.

**Against consumer society,  
against civilization,  
until no one has to live in a cage!**



1. ed. – "The Animal Aid Society's "Campaign to Promote the Vegetarian Diet" calculates that ten acres will feed two people keeping cattle, ten eating maize, twenty-four munching wheat, and sixty-one gulping soya. The same space would probably support one or fewer hunter-gatherers. There is nothing wrong with their humane effort "toward fighting hunger in the Third World" of course, but what is life to be like for the sixty-one people and what do we do when there are 122 or 488? And what becomes of the Fourth World of tribal peoples or the Fifth World of nonhuman life? The quantitative-mindedness links them philosophically with the nationalistic maximizers who assume that military advantage belongs to the most populous countries, with the politics of growth-economists and with the local greed for sales" (Paul Shepard).

2. ed. – "[René] Descartes was the man who famously said "I think therefore I am" for those who haven't studied classical philosophy (which is generally, in my opinion, a bunch of white men trying to place humans above the rest of the world, but that is a whole other can of worms). He is also the philosopher responsible for the popularization of the contemporary concept of the mechanization of the body and the body as an individual thing, separate from the context of its existence. Prior to Descartes, people thought that their bodies were part of a greater whole: their community and the larger community of the land they lived on. Descartes' ideas were very appealing to the ruling class, who were trying to establish a new order: capitalism. In the infancy of capitalism, ideas about the body needed to change. Waged labour turned the body into capital, something that exists beyond the natural cycles of a wild human body. Capitalism required that the ruling class have more control over bodies in order to extract higher profits. Reconceptualizing the body as machine, as something that existed to be controlled and put to work, served the ruling elite in their enforcement of budding capitalism. Capitalism also required the newer idea of land privatization. Descartes' ideas of the "individual", something separate from all else, created a philosophy where land exploitation was justifiable. Humans who are not connected to a land base have an easier time exploiting it. There was much rebellion against Descartes' ideas and against the beginnings of capitalism.

*The peasantry did not easily accept the view of body as separate and rebelled against land privatization and waged labour. So it was in this time that almost 200 different crimes were punishable by death as a means of the ruling class to enforce capitalistic ideas and force bodies to act as controllable machines" (Descartes & the Creation of the Individual).*

3. ed. – *Freegans refuse non-vegan food/goods if they have had to pay for it, but will use it in some cases if they have stolen, found, or been given it. In this way they claim not to support the industry.*

4. ed. – *"Hunting is a social relationship between humans and animal persons carried on in terms and acts that signify, among other forms of sociality, respect, reciprocity, propitiation, sympathy, taboo, seduction, sacrifice, coercion, recognition, compassion, domination, temptation, surrender and various combinations thereof. Hunting is a culturally-informed, transpecific sociology. People are thus engaged in transactions with the spirits of animals that correspond to exchanges between human persons and groups. Especially these transactions are likely to resemble exchanges with relatives by marriage, insofar as the latter similarly involve fraught negotiations for the transfer of life-powers from one group to another. [Claude] Levi-Strauss relates a tradition (originally recorded by J.A. Teit) concerning the origin of the wild goat hunt along the Thompson River people of Northwest America, in which the goat principal is not only human but a brother-in-*

*law of the human hero. The latter is promised he will become a great hunter if he follows certain rules: "When you kill goats, treat their bodies respectfully, for they are people. Do not shoot the female goats for they are your wives and will bear your children. Do not kill kids, for they may be your offspring. Only shoot your brothers-in-law, the male goats. Do not be sorry when you kill them, for they do not die but return home. The flesh and skin (the goat part) remain in your possession, but their real selves (the human part) lives just as before, when it was covered with goat's flesh and skin." In other Amerindian narratives, the hunter becomes a privileged son-in-law of the spirit master of the game species by mating with the master's daughter. Although the neo-Darwinian sciences of our animality, culminating in the current Evolutionary Psychology, would have it that we still suffer genetically from the ferocity that the human species found adaptive in its long history of surviving by the killing of animals, the ethnographic evidence is that hunting is generally more involved with making love than making war" (The Western Illusion of Human Nature).*

5. ed. – *One of the reasons we chose not to prioritise space for the appendix here is a skepticism we hold in general towards these kinds of studies (though it's certainly worth reading for description of vegan ideologues' manipulations within the scientific realm they appeal to the authority of). Dot Matrix's words on this resonate: "Science is so widely accepted*

*that for many people it has in fact become synonymous with problem solving. Even people who are critical of most other aspects of the culture we live in, find themselves reverting to science when pushed to defend their ideas, e.g. anti-civilization anarchists who refer to biology when attempting to convince about an optimal diet, or to anthropology to prove the superiority of their blue print for future societies. [...] On a practical level there is the understanding that scientists are operating within a system that is based as much (if not more) on hierarchy and funding as it is on paying attention to what is actually going on around us. There are multiple accounts (even from conventional sources) showing that who is funding a study has a substantive impact on what the study discovers, from tobacco's impact on health to the possibility of restricting the spread of genetically modified organisms, but these examples are merely the most obvious. The more subtle ones have to do with how we ask questions ("when did you stop beating your child?"), who we ask questions of (related to the questioner's access, biases, language, etc.), what questions we think to ask, and how we understand the answers we get, as well as what meta-interests the questions serve (how are the assumptions of this culture fed and/or challenged by who, how, and of whom these questions get asked?). [...] While on one hand science is a response to the superstition and hierarchy associated with religion, it also continues christianity's theme of a pure abstract and universal truth, separate from the sludge of everyday life, with scientists and doctors in the position of clergy that is, people who know more about us than we do. Some people believe in science (as something they don't understand that can solve their problems) in ways similar to how others believe in god. Some people cite scientific references the way that other people cite scripture. Traditionally, science posits a neutral objective observer, a fantastical being to compare to any angel or demon: this neutral observer has no interest other than truth, which comes from information, and information is received inside of laboratories, with carefully identified variables and carefully maintained control sets. (The mystification of this awesome observer is only magnified, not ameliorated, by the addition of peer review, in which a body of knowledgeable colleagues examine the experiments and data to verify their validity)."*

6. ed. – *"Oil spills damage bird-nesting sites, coat beach habitats in sludge, and poison and directly kill fish, birds, and other marine life. Pipeline construction destroys wildlife habitat. Oil refineries spew pollution into waterways, poisoning animals and destroying their breeding sites. This says nothing of the resource wars for oil that have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, and continue to, in Afghanistan, Iraq and Africa, as well as destroyed the ecological integrity of those regions. The fact is, organic soybeans used for tofu, tempeh, and fake meats, just like any other product in the store, use the same industrial distribution system that consumes enormous amounts of oil and other resources to package, store, transport, and distribute food and non-food commodities the world over. This translates into mountainsides and rivers destroyed from mining fossil fuels, forests cleared for packaging materials, chemical pollution from the manufacture of the inks, adhesives and lubricants, and so on and so forth. All these industrial processes poison animals and destroy their habitats" (The Harvest of Dead Elephants).*

*"My relationship to other animal species is mechanical and disconnected. Aside from pets and pests, I relate indirectly to livestock through mediation of an enormous industry which uses techniques I barely understand and which I am shielded from by my life in a city. Unlike with pets, I can only relate to livestock categorically. I can form no bonds with particular cows, chickens, pigs, and fish. I can only consider them all generally, as the multiplied reiteration of livestock I have met and the treatment I am aware that they receive. What*

*I am actually presented with in my everyday life are various cuts of raw meat, products which may or may not be based on animal substances, menus with pictures of prepared dishes, items that were tested first on other animal species, and propaganda put out by corporations and/or activist groups. Livestock and lab animals are represented to me, but they aren't actually a part of my experience. This is true for everything I eat, wear, medicinally treat myself with, and use. The world that I live in is a giant, illustrious production that has been designed by human beings, for human*

*beings... to shelter each of the individuals who can afford it, away from the wilderness, from agriculture, from mass-production, from landfills, and from slums. [...] Although there are some cracks through which unwanted elements seep through and into my everyday life: pollution lowers the air quality, global warming fucks with the weather, a disease will gain entry through products, the tap water tastes terrible, animals being transported can sometimes be seen on the roads, a forest fire will make the headlines, etc. Regardless, the way in which consumption takes place – although*

*changing – doesn't speak to the origins of the materials very loudly. Before the problem of what to consume is the problem of how to go about consuming. Perhaps even the question of how to go about producing! What would most effectively change my relationship to other animal species is those more basic questions which would dramatically alter the way I confront that which I consume. Without those changes, all of my consumption choice is derived from abstract considerations, from the world of representation. [...] There are times when I may feel like I have been tricked and if I had known better, would not consent to the consumption of one product or another.*

*But the fact of the matter is that where consent is concerned, it is my own consent which is to be questioned and not that of the entities which I am making decisions for one way or another... whose life quality and quantity is calibrated by the mechanisms of markets and conditions produced by human civilization." – squee*

## 'CONNECTIONS & TRANSFORMATIONS'

[ed. – Drawn from two Paul Shepard essays, 'Animal Rights & Human Rites' and 'Searching Out Kindred Spirits'.]

[Today's concern for the well-being of animals] has an Oriental<sup>[1]</sup> expression, a logic by which rights of creatures, so frustrating in their semantic and practical aspects, can be serenely refined to the purity of nonkilling. A recent example of this view was Albert Schweitzer, who, combining St. Augustine<sup>[2]</sup> with Hindu Jainism<sup>[3]</sup>, was devoted to the protection from death or injury of all life, however minute or inconspicuous. Schweitzer's "reverence for life" was an endless chain of excruciating decisions in all things medical and horticultural. **His unshakable conviction of the rights of life over death and of the priority of human value did not mitigate his sombre sense of judgement and responsibility.** For him, too, the care of life was associated with giving shelter. He kept captive a small menagerie of wild animals so that he could admire them. As among all wild captives made into pets, these animals were amputated from their gene pool and from fellow creatures and habitat; no amount of loving care could prevent them from becoming neurotic and flabby monsters.

Schweitzer's impulse to "extend to all all that respect which we have to our own," however much influenced by Eastern thought, is clearly related to Western humanitarian social justice. **It was part of the colonial mind, a kind of obligation to those "less fortunate" on a scale where rank is confirmed as much by responsibility as privilege. Charity has always had something of the readiness to be resigned to a status quo [ed. – and indeed this was borne out in Schweitzer's paternalistic conduct towards the recipients of his 'aid' in the colonies, despite his critical filibuster].** That the relationship between nonhuman species should require human intervention, though as old as the old "dominion" precepts in Genesis [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg40], could only be acted upon by those who knew themselves to be the instruments of God's will. Even so, Schweitzer is no exception to the general sense of alienation that preoccupied European philosophy and literature at the time [1920's-30's], for it was a strategy in which humanism and technology combined to prove human transcendence.

[...] Apprehension of connectedness to nature is precisely the weakness of Western ethics. Marriage and diet are the universal means and symbols of relationship. [...] In the cynegetic [hunting-gathering] view the world is an exquisitely elaborated comity laced through with eating habits, the most conspicuous and important threads of connection and significance. When one senses, however momentarily, that experience of a world of beings which it produces, the loneliness of modern humankind can be seen as an ecological as much as a social phenomenon. No one could be lonely in a world so richly populated.

### [...] Diversity and kinship of life not only include the fact of death but require it.

Causing death – requiring it in order to live – pricks our conscience. In the city, it is possible to hire professionals who hide the death in the slaughterhouse. But in the world at large, the hunt must be faced. [...] Among traditional hunters, intelligent quarry are the most prized and respected. **Animals are not classified into levels of significance that excuse the killing of "lower" forms and preserve the "higher."** Instead, it is just those great sensitive beasts – aurochs, horses, elephants, and bears – that are most appropriately killed and most deeply revered. Where we seem the consumption of animals as participation in the transfer of energy, as do traditional hunters, they also see it as the movement of an endless spiritual flow. To live and to die is to be surrounded by beings whose coming and going are intrinsic to life itself.

[...] The crucial moment in the hunt is not the "taking" of a life but the moment of respect and affirmation for a giving world. [...] **In the hunt, we focus our attention on the mystery of life-giving substance – a substance available only in death (whether that of plants or animals).** ["Rights" and "ethics"] are pale, rational-legalistic concepts. **In the case of the hunt, such socially defined concerns are wholly inadequate.** In killing, some people try to work down the scale of life as they imagine it – from big, smart animals to the mindless fish – hoping at last to eradicate the butchering of bodies like their own. This frantic perpetuation of life is deeply inorganic, a denial of our own bodies.

It is, in truth, a denial of every aspect of our nature. We are each porous, actively exchanging with the world at large [ed. – see *Symbiogenetic Desire*]. What we take in – and not only as physical food – becomes some aspect of the self. Perceptually, animals constitute elements of the potential self as it grows. **In their taxonomy, animals provide us with the concrete reality of categories of existence. In our dreams, they model for us – as reflected in our childhood mimicry in dance and play – our vast range of feelings.**

The great miscalculation is to say, "Welcome all births, save all lives." Compassionate on the surface, its effect is to destroy life, in the long perspective causing more havoc than does ordinary malevolence. The alternative is not an ascetic otherworldliness that will "deny birth and welcome death." Instead, it is as if one were to say, "Celebrate new life as provisional, affirm that death will balance the scale, and accept that human beings are part of the whole."

Regardless of food habits, everything from protozoa to tigers incorporates other life to live – other life that must be searched out and must die. All are hunted in turn. The great predatory carnivores demonstrate it most plainly, but even they, in the end, are pursued by microbes, fungi, and plant roots. [...] Like all human activity, hunting can run amok – in both killing and estrangement. **We all know of the modern abuse of hunting protocol, the secular trivialization of killing.** [...] We are easily seduced by our own empathy because of our fear and outrage at the indifferent destructiveness around us. However, kindness towards animals demands a true sense of kinship. To be kindred does not mean that we should treat animals as our babies. It means instead a sense of many connections and transformations – us into them, them into us, and them into each other from the beginning of time. To be kindred means to share consciously in the stream of life.

1. ed. – *Western fascination with, projection onto, but ultimately patronising of aspects in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and East Asian cultures; famously a thrust of 19th century European art and literature.*

2. ed. – St. Augustine (354-430), Roman African, early Christian theologian from Numidia, influential on Western philosophy, and helped formulate the doctrine of original sin (to be remedied by the restraint of law on humans).

3. ed. – From the same author: "The Buddhists' contemporaries and fellow travelers, the Jains, famous for ahimsa (harmlessness), are familiarly portrayed moving insects from the footpath. But this is not because they love life or nature. The Jains are revolted by participation in the living stream and want as little as possible to do with the organic bodies, which are like tar pits, trapping and suffocating the soul. Historically, it would appear that both Buddhists and Jains got something from the Aryans, who brought their high-flying, earth-escaping gods from Middle East pastoralism. In the face of these invasions, the Hindus and their unzipped polytheism [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg41] survived best in the far south of India, where the Western monotheists penetrated least. At a more practical level, everywhere the "world" religions have gone the sacred forests, springs, and other "places" and their wild inhabitants have vanished. The disappearance of respect for local earth-shrines is virtually a measure of the impact of the otherworldly beliefs."

# 'AT THE ROOT OF MY SURVIVAL'

[ed. – *The comrade Tortuga interviewed here was badly injured going into action. His right hand and three fingers of the left were amputated as a result, dozens of skin grafts were done, and (at least to begin with) his sight seriously damaged. While he was in intensive care on the verge of death, and the mother of his daughter raided and put in the media, Tortuga's own family denounced his ideas and way of life, freely telling police of his social circles. In letters that he composed while imprisoned, Tortuga brought up the consequences of struggle in the era of a global politics of 'anti-terrorism'*

– as well as more timelessly – in a way that bears reflecting on. "I will not deny that things were difficult, because there were days dark as the depths of the sea, when everything was crumbling around me, my life as I had constructed it went to shit. But this helped me, with the pain caused, to learn that all this I had built I had not made sufficiently solidly as to endure the praxis of my discourse. [If family, friends, comrades and lovers took off flying,] many thought that it would be better for me to just sink alone before I would take more people down with me, since they believe that I would never get back up from this, if all these people underestimated me because in their smallness they thought that they themselves wouldn't be able to stand such a fall as mine, today they are not at my side, it is only for their mediocrity, because know this: I do not lack the affection to forgive them, after everything, not one of us was prepared for this. [...] And it is that on this occasion I can contribute with some examples, through which I encourage other comrades to share their experiences, since the possibilities of struggle are infinite, madness, rape, exile, mutilation, victory, torture, clandestinity, laughter, imprisonment, pain, betrayal, amnesia, dependency, beatings, humiliation, death, all of these, none, others, and so many more, and how many of the warriors in the street today who fight against power and its designs know this? That is, how prepared are we to assume the costs of the social war if we do not know these kinds of things? Can we speak of not repenting without having all this in consideration? [T]o be recognized as an enemy of authority is not easy, less so when you are labeled as a terrorist in the media, your social environment is affected almost unanimously [...] few are the brave who dare to remain with you. **Public opinion does its work and through all the possible methods the system tries to isolate you.** They don't have to get their hands dirty with the death penalty anymore, these days the methods are more

sophisticated and democratic [ed. – see **Who Is It?**]; they make your life cease to have meaning because they distance you from everything that you are a part of. And they don't just do this physically by getting you in a cage, but also psychologically to reduce your convictions. They demonize you collectively, they erase the memory of what you once were and they transform you into a television case, in a failed explosive attack, in a bank robbery with a policeman killed, or into a member of a phantasmic terrorist organization. You are that, you are your letter of presentation, to such an extent that if you don't become aware that you are much more than what the press says. **You end up believing it[...]** your days no longer have the sense they did before, you are worth nothing and you have ruining the lives of everyone around you – why keep existing? Why cause more pain? They no longer need to stain their hands with your blood; please, we are civilized people, instead they incite you to finish yourself off[...]

This is the hidden discourse that reproduces our shiny Chilean democracy; there are no longer any revolutionaries, now they minimize us as mere terrorists, because clearly a revolutionary is someone with feelings, with ideas, love of freedom and a companion of the oppressed: that is, someone worth imitating. Instead the terrorist is a shadow with impunity who has no heart and is obsessed with the use of violence due to past childhood traumas – **so how to face this situation?** [...] I took my time, I went as slow as a turtle, I exercised every day without a break, whether it was cold or hot, I was disciplined with myself, and it was a question of practice, patience and perseverance (the 3 "P's" like I told you) [and well,] here I am, look at me one year after the bombing that almost killed me. Who said that I would bite the mud of humiliation forever? Who said that I would be defeated for the rest of my life? Who said that the struggle does not make us great? If my ideas can bring me to lose my life, they can also bring me to recover it, that was always my gamble..." **Tortuga is serving six years of 'supervised freedom'.** On preparing for and surviving prison more generally, for those in the U.K. (especially those at risk of being gendered 'female' by State classification) we recommend 'Bang-Up & Smash' by ASBO, free online.]

**The Ex-Worker Podcast:** Who are we speaking with today, and where are we?

**Tortuga:** With Luciano Pitronello, *el Tortuga*, and we're in the self-managed social center and autonomous library Sante Geronimo Caserio.

**Ex-Worker:** And how long has the space been around? Is it new?

**Tortuga:** Yes, it's new. it's been 3 or 4 months since we got here and started setting things up, and it's been just a month and a half that we've been able to open the doors to the public.

**Ex-Worker:** Have you heard that there's a book of your prison letters translated into English in the United States?

**Tortuga:** Yeah, I mean... I heard because you told me like a second ago, but it's still a surprise.

under the anti-terrorist law and I ended up imprisoned in the hospital ward of Concesionada Prison, Santiago 1, because of the multiple injuries my body had sustained.

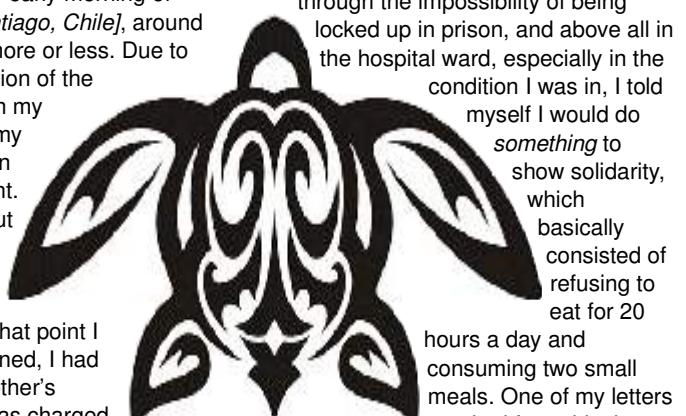
From this regimen, which was a pretty difficult place to be since it wasn't designed for somebody to be there permanently, but rather was a ward designed to receive prisoners or new arrestees as a kind of clinic, like for after somebody gets into a fight with another prisoner or after getting beat by the guards, after getting stabbed, or for people with illnesses that are easily treatable... so living there was, pretty... well, it wasn't very normal. So it was there that I had to get used to the idea of living in that situation.

The first few months of my incarceration passed, and after the visit of a loving comrade I got ready to write my first letter, and at the root of this was that my friend advised me that the silence surrounding my situation was not a good sign for the rest of our comrades. Basically from there I wrote the first letter, about 7 months after the failed attack, which is entitled 'Letter to the Indomitable Hearts', which was published the 5th of January, 2012 if I recall correctly.

After this would come a second letter, which would be a gesture of support and solidarity with Freddy Fuentevilla, Marcelo Villarroel [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Concerning the Juridical Situation of Our Comrade Marcelo Villarroel** Sepulveda], and Juan Aliste Vega, who at that time were in the middle of an international week of agitation and support for their case. And we should remember that just recently these three were convicted [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.3 pg52**] in the Caso Security and the death of the police corporal Luis Moyano and the injuries of another police officer. But before then they spent many many years in prison [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg72**], and

ever since I came to realize that prison is a kind of passage for any combatant or comrade who takes "the idea" [of anarchism] seriously, they've been in my everyday thoughts.

So the way that I made myself present in trying to express solidarity with them, through the impossibility of being locked up in prison, and above all in the hospital ward, especially in the condition I was in, I told myself I would do something to show solidarity, which basically consisted of refusing to eat for 20 hours a day and consuming two small meals. One of my letters resulted from this time,



which I suppose is in the book... but in reality I haven't seen the book so I don't know if all the letters actually do appear, but I hope they do!

Well, this was the February of 2012. Afterward there was a week of agitation in solidarity with me, which started on the 20th of March, which I believe is the day that my trial began, or the preparations for trial – I don't quite remember anymore<sup>[1]</sup>. What I do remember is that the day I entered the prison was the 22nd of November, of 2011.

So the months went by, and I wrote a third letter, a third communiqué, which as I understand it is the most valuable in terms of wanting to pass on a little of the experience of being in prison, that in reality wasn't much time, and might not be the experience that all comrades have in prison. So in this third effort I wrote a communiqué at one year on from the failed bombing that affected me, which is entitled 'The Abyss Does Not Stop Us'.

**In there I basically offer three reflections. The first is about prison. The second is about what it means morally, socially, even emotionally, to be charged as a terrorist, or as an enemy of the state, which is what happened to me. And the third is more specifically about my case, and deals with the subject of mutilation, to have one's body reduced physically; this is the theme. I try to cover each of these three themes from two perspectives: the first being a general manner, how to understand the problem in general terms, and the second being from my own subjectivity, how I see things, how I felt in certain moments... how I confronted things, basically.**

In this third letter I also responded to the proposal [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg44**] from the comrades in Greece of the International Revolutionary Front and the Informal Anarchist Federation. **I conclude that at the root of my survival was the solidarity that the comrades showed me.** Because in every one of these three processes – being locked up in prison, being charged as a terrorist or enemy of the state, and becoming disabled – in every one of these processes I was gripped by this weapon that we have as anarchists, which is solidarity.

**Ex-Worker:** Were there any other prisoners who inspired you to carry on during your time in prison, either through their words or writings or deeds?

**Tortuga:** Yes, definitely. When I was locked up I discovered the story of Marcela Rodriguez, who was a militant for the MAPU Lautaro [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Concerning the Juridical Situation of Our Comrade Marcelo**

"Able-embodiment is temporary, conditional, and under direct assault by the pollutions and economic obstructions leaving your health to chance and a function of your zip code. [...] I think the impulse to burn it all down or to retreat to the wilderness and find some long ago purged part of ourselves there or to die trying are feelings we all move through. [I]t is critical that we think as disabled people, even if we momentarily experience able-embodiment. As climate health worsens, our own health worsens too. How will we replace industrialized medicine, or rob the healthcare industry of the power to profiteer off our disabilities? How will we grow and manufacture our own pharmacies? How will we reclaim our bodies, our narratives, our medicines, and our assistance tech from capitalism? In our utopian futures, healthcare is a community function, and the health of the commons is where that value plants its roots. Beyond the medical model, how too will we create sustainable communities structured in such a way to weather not only climate change but the physical changes of human experience? How will we modify our communities to account for multiple modes of accessibility, and to treat soil health, air quality, water potability, tree health, animal health, and human health as one holistic equation? [...] Other disabled people have other types of needs. Others have different forms of mobility, sensory experience, and physicality. Disability is wide-ranging and diverse in scale. Our experience of life is marked both by hyper-visibility and invisibility, social stigma, and the embodiment of difference. Whereas one may argue that other forms of prejudice can be resolved by changing social attitudes about their focus, changing attitudes towards disability will not resolve difference. Prejudice isn't the cause of lost limbs, deafness, malfunctioning organs, etc. And while capitalism is undoubtedly exploiting the health and life out of disabled people everywhere and informing ableism particularly in relation to employability and worker efficiency, neither is capitalism the cause of disability. Disability is rather an experience of being human. As we age, our bodies break down on the way to death. As we experience the wildness of life, disability becomes us. As we are born, our bodies map an orgy of natural physicalities innate to human biology, mind and flesh, inside and out. The eugenicist and capitalist fallacy of the perfect worker is a dark magic spell freak witches and wizards everywhere have been disabling."

– *Our Disabled and Climate-Changed Futures*

**Villaroel Sepulveda**], who received the impact of a bullet on her spine during one of the Lautaro's operations. On the 14th of November, 1990 they were trying to rescue a political prisoner, Marco Ariel Antonioletti, from a hospital. In this operation the Lautaro killed 4 prison guards by a small bomb, and a cop went down too. The cop wasn't really in the plans, let's say, and it was he who fired the shot that left our compañera [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.2 pg34**] paraplegic. After she received the impact of the bullet, the group rescued Antonioletti and carried the two of them off to a truck. Just a few minutes later, the radio announces that there was a woman with Marcela's features involved in the escape, but with the damage to her spine they had to take her back to the very same hospital they had rescued Antonioletti from. She went to prison, of course, after being operated on and put in a wheelchair, and continued fighting.

Her story is really comforting because she spent 12 years in the San Miguel Prison, in the hospital section. When I found out this story, which I found out through a book called 'Rebellion, Subversion, & Political Imprisonment', written by Pedro Rosas, who also ended up prisoner in the High Security Prison (CAS) for MIR [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.1 pg73**] guerrilla activity.

And it's a heavy story, because for political prisoners in Chile to be able to achieve privileges like leaving the prison for certain amounts of time, visiting other parts of the prison, and other benefits, they have to undergo a lot of mobilization: hunger strikes, rebellions... Here in Chile between 2000 and 2004 there was strong agitation by and for political prisoners. So Marcela Rodriguez, who was like the symbol of what nobody in society should ever be like – because she was a woman, an armed woman who robbed banks, who would carry a machine gun where she went (that's what they called her actually, the "Machine Gun Woman") – she was photographed in MAPU Lautaro operations, basically they wanted her head, they wanted her as a trophy. So the pressure on the government to allow this terrorist to leave prison, to be on the street, put them in an uncomfortable position. Eventually, what they offer her is extradition. Now, what is extradition? Basically, it's forced exile. Marcela Rodriguez is free in any part of the world except Chile. The powerful part of the story is Marcela ends up accepting asylum (which isn't truly asylum) in Italy, with her wheelchair and all. A woman who can't even move around just by herself winds up being more dangerous than all these other folks. It's crazy, this story!

**And when she leaves prison the reporters go crazy because she was always this press magnet. They try to record her in the airport, and the last image of her in Chile is of Marcela in her wheelchair, crossing the border immigration guards to board the plane, raising her fist and shouting “la lucha continua” – the struggle continues.**

When I found out this story, I said “I can’t give up, man. If she could do it like that, I can’t give up here.” That’s also how the story of Savvas Xiros is, from the 17th of November organization in Greece. In 2002, he was injured by a failed bomb and ended up in circumstances similar to my own. But lamentably, he is going to spend many years in prison, because he is part of a terrorist organization... well in reality it’s not terrorist but revolutionary, and they’ve been operating for 29 years. So the luck that Savvas Xiros had, the luck of Marcela Rodriguez is truly cruel

because at the heart of it they both have disability and prison as their destiny, yet even with this heavy baggage they are capable of continuing to struggle.

So I look at myself and I see that I can still go on, and so I can’t give up, man! So for me, these *compañeros* are a compass, they’re my north; they’ve shown the way because they’ve raised the bar to where I have to meet it. It might be a strange way to look at it, but that’s really how I see it. Like that. [Tortuga went on to describe a prisoner support project that he’s involved in, and his perspectives of the significance of prisoners and solidarity among anarchists and antagonists in Chile.]

**Tortuga:** Projects of support for comrades in prison... there’s the project I was telling you about – the solidarity raffle, which is organized by a group of folks and what we do is give away prizes in the form of a raffle in order to collect some funds, even though it may not be a ton, for our comrades in prison. This is an event that happens every month. Every month we look for an event where we can hold the raffle, and we assemble a schedule of events on our webpage, can I give it to you?

**Ex-Worker:** Yes, please!

**Tortuga:** It’s [rifasolidaria.wordpress.com](http://rifasolidaria.wordpress.com). Basically the idea is generate a steady stream of funds which, like I said, isn’t a ton but it’s at least a small effort to show

our comrades that they’re not alone. I’ve also seen on the internet some communiqués from an anti-prison collective “Vuelo de Justicia” (“Flight of Justice”, named after an incredible prison break in 1996, look it up!) And as I understand it, although I don’t know a ton, this collective has been pretty active looking after lots of the comrades in prison. There’s also a website for a periodical that also gets printed, which is called ‘Publicacion Refractario’. It’s well known, and also has a pretty internationalist character; it’s very good. They’re always publishing updates about the comrades in prison, developments in their case, legal work that the comrades have to face, and material for supporting a comrade if they should get imprisoned.

**Ex-Worker:** In the anarchist movement,

here in Chile and more broadly, what role does prisoner support play?

**Tortuga:** According to my way of thinking about this topic, here in Chile there is no movement. There are

**basically individuals that struggle, each in their own rhythm and pulse, in their own particular and unique ways, but there isn’t a... I don’t know how to say it... there isn’t a movement, so to speak. There’s convergence, gathering points, but beyond this... it’s difficult to say.**

Because unfortunately, and I don’t like to say it, there’s a lot of people just here for fashion. They’re around because politics is a means to other things: to find friends, to find romantic partners, to feel a sense of belonging, to feel like you’re part of something. So sometimes you can find comrades who are super excited, very involved, but at the end of the day it only lasts for a year, a year and a half.

Repression comes down and they run. I believe that to call something a movement it has to be something that moves you; it’s something that can maintain itself against repression, and when there’s not repression, onward!

So I don’t believe there is a movement here. What no one can deny is that there are communities in struggle, which is different to me. This social center for me is a community of struggle. The Sacco and Vanzetti *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg86]* library is, for me, a community of struggle. For me, the squat Isla Tortuga is a community of struggle. Regardless of the forms of how each community or group involves themselves – their form, their rhythm, their pulse – we have different ways of going about things, but you can’t

deny that these people, these spaces are fighting back. This is something you can’t lie about..

Coming back to your question – support for prisoners, the way I see it, has deteriorated. It has deteriorated because the anarchists here in Chile, or the anti-authoritarians, the nihilists, the revolutionaries, however you want to call them, are encountering prison as something pretty new in our lives. In general the anarchist “movement” in Chile is very new<sup>[2]</sup>. I mean, *Caso Bombas* *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg73]* demonstrated this. When police raided a few squats, everybody ran for cover, everyone hid their face. This shows you how unstable the movement was, evidenced by how unprepared we were to live through prison, and even less prepared to confront it. Through this you can see that in a lot of cases that you might say “good, they’re getting support” or “they’re getting attention” but obviously something is missing. **Something is missing like...**

**Why are we appealing to show that cases were frame ups? Why do our comrades stay silent? Or like, why don’t we ever stand up to the judges? And I include myself, I criticize the way I’ve gone about things too. Why do we appeal to innocence? Why do we accept the way we’re treated?**

There’s a ton of things that we might not always capable of confronting. So for example I see, well I don’t want to idealize anything, but I think it’s worth understanding that Greece is a little more advanced, at least in terms of history, and in Greece it’s a different conversation. The comrades there confront these issues in a different manner. So if you’re over there and looking at the situation here... well here, if in Greece they’re walking upright, we’re crawling on all fours. Of course throughout the world there are other places where there aren’t even comrades, where there isn’t anything going on. But it’s important to keep in mind how recent all of this is here, to understand how much further we have to go. But I’m not satisfied with crawling, I want to gallop, I want to run, I want to fly. And for this, you have to work.

**Ex-Worker:** Three questions in one: after your time in prison how has your orientation to anarchist strategy changed? And I don’t mean which acts or tactics are more important, but I’m speaking about the anarchist project in general. How has your orientation changed and what tasks do you think are most important? OK, that’s one; secondly, what would you say to someone considering risking their freedom to do something, like taking direct action? And what would you say to someone who would never consider that, who just want to live a life of safety and comfort, but who are still anarchists?



**Tortuga:** Well, this reply may disappoint you a little, but my outlook hasn't actually drastically changed. I still hold the same beliefs that I did on the first of June in 2011, you know? For me, there isn't some big difference between a comrade who carries a bomb in their backpack or one who carries a book. For me, both tools, when aimed directly at the bowels of power, can achieve the same task. **It's all the same for me if a comrade carries a submachine gun or carries a microphone. To me what is central is where the attack is directed towards.** The tool you utilize is a question of comfort and familiarity, it's a question of whether you feel satisfied with what you're doing: to feel pleasure basically, to feel good and that what you're doing is the right thing. If you feel like the thing to do is publish a newspaper – great! Then I'm happy for you. If what you think is needed nowadays is to attack capital in some direct manner – all right then, do it! But for me, what upsets me is knowing that something needs to be done and not doing it. In there I see a contradiction in my way of understanding the struggle.

So my way of responding to your question wouldn't be to say that we'll have a better revolution by having more of one thing, or that one thing is better than another... I don't know, the library, doing workshops, direct attacks, expropriations: to me these all have the same worth, there isn't one that's more valuable than another. If you

can defend what you're doing with enough passion, then it's alright with me.

And what would I say to the comrades who want to carry out direct action, or who are carrying out direct action? Well... I know that if somebody is listening to this they're just listening, they can't make a case out of my words alone, but whatever. I would say to *be careful, take care*. For me it's like they say, you've got to face reality, but you've got to take care. You have to give yourself time to plan well.

**For the anarchists, or the nihilists or the revolutionaries, what we have plenty of is heart. But war isn't won with heart alone. We need to use a little more prudence – so the action won't be today, it will be tomorrow but it will also be better.** It will be better planned, more focused on the safety of those involved, and other small details that I don't know if I can pass on here. But like I've written, one mistake, one small neglect can change everything. And we are far too valuable to be needlessly putting ourselves at risk. **I think my most focused advice today would be, more than anything, that this comrade value herself [sic], that she not feel like her life is just a material contribution to the struggle. I would tell this comrade to value herself a little more, that she give herself time and room to breathe.** That's all, that the struggle is for your whole life, it won't change by waiting one more night.

To the comrades who would never think of focusing their struggle on direct action, I would respond with basically the first points I made about fighting in an illegal manner – because I'm using the vocabulary of power, which is a contradiction, but, well, what can we do? Life is a contradiction itself! Well, OK, it doesn't matter if somebody doesn't want to confront power with a gun or a bomb. Getting involved in a newspaper or something, that's fine, but I think the important thing to understand is that prison, death, clandestinity, having to go to battle are things that don't only face the comrades who pick up a weapon. In the dictatorship here, unfortunately it was a struggle of fire and blood. To have had a newspaper, a printing press, just copying a flyer would mean torture, possibly even death. So in this sense, if you're not going to use a gun, that's fine by me. What's most important to me is that you can defend your project and your idea.

**Ex-Worker:** Anything more for our listeners, the *gringos* of the north, or the rest of the English-speaking world?

**Tortuga:** Keep it up, Seattle May Day!!!



Mayday 2012, Seattle, U.S.A

## EL TORTUGA - poem for Luciano

*[ed. – From 325 magazine #9, near the time of his wounding.]*

we stand, el tortuga,  
steady and strong,  
held like all the people  
before us and beside us,  
on the turtles back  
  
your shell catches our tears  
of joy, of sorrow,  
fresh hollow-ways down  
which we slide  
into new worlds,  
delighted as children,  
carving deeper into freedom  
with every thought of you

we do not know you,  
yet we feel you, brother,  
and we felt each moment

we send you the deep valleys,  
the falcons calling across blue  
sky  
the sunsets which pour light  
into the hills  
like evening wine into  
vermillion cups

we send you the strike of a  
match,  
the midnight routes,

the anarchist plots hatched  
amongst  
the looking-glass swamps  
and embroidered trees  
the joy of a bulls-eye on a  
paper wall

we send you our vision with  
which we also  
walk into a future we cannot  
clearly see  
  
you walked strong and blind,  
injured but unbowed  
by the flames you set against  
the enemy  
and we lend you our own  
hands  
setting their own flames  
against the same enemy

we share with you  
the stealth of the night air  
which only the saboteur  
knows,  
guided by owls through the  
underworld,  
the scent of dark grass, the  
cooling concrete,  
the quiet dust,  
the moonlit stench  
of abandoned alleyways,  
the startled thwack of wings in  
the trees,  
that spectacular, lonely wind  
exhilarating determined skin

the sudden flame in the dark  
el tortuga, we too know the  
feel  
of those guerilla nights  
when only the present moment  
exists,  
when only war walks masked  
through the sullen, daring  
streets,  
provoking sunrise  
and the awakening of life into  
the promise of a better day  
than today

those nights are ours too  
and in our sleeplessness,  
we send you our dreams  
remember, el tortuga,  
if you are held now in the  
hands of our  
jailers, you are held more  
tightly  
in the hearts of your comrades,  
known and unknown,

and for those of us who accept  
that we will all, in the end,  
be burnt by our own fire,  
we take strength from the fact  
that  
even in flames you did not  
kneel.

L.L.

1. ed. – Court began July 20th, with rallies in Concepción, Valparaíso and Santiago and a bomb-threat clearing part of the complex. From the beginning of the case, plate-glass of Santander Bank fell to explosives or blows in Tultitlán and (twice in the same night) in Bristol, while incendiary messages of solidarity arrived from Russia, Indonesia and beyond on the back of similar deeds.

2. ed. – “Perhaps one of the most disastrous consequences [of the dictatorship] was the production of a generation lacking in almost all senses: emotionally lacking, lacking a sense of belonging, lacking existential paradigms, and thus lacking passion, lacking will... castrated in the broadest sense of the word. Our parents were the children beaten, raped, tortured, and murdered by the imposition of first world shock necessary for the violent mutation from the “Chilean way to socialism” [ed. – the plan to put Chile on a ‘non-capitalist’ road to ‘development’, a contradiction in terms...] to the kingdom of commodities[...] And our inheritance, our American dream that we lived – and we did live it – we carry it in our bodies: the insecurity, the terror, the impossibility of recognizing ourselves as a community or continuity from the past, not to mention as a community in antagonistic struggle[...] Along with our guts, they cut us off from our history and here we are, improvising, relearning, reinventing ourselves [ed. – see ‘The Matter of Knowing Who We Are’]. [...] This construction of an ideology, worldview, spirituality, or whatever it may be called, within the anti-authoritarian spectrum is recent and, like everything new, is complex and is constructed basically from experience, ergo beginning from trial and error” (Anarchic Practices in the Territory Dominated by the Chilean State).

# WILD PLANTS –

## Hawthorne (berries) & Sweet Chestnuts

### Hawthorne (berries)

This medium-sized deciduous tree prefers moist, alkaline soil and full sun (but is tolerant of most soils), and lives to a great age. They are often planted as dense hedgerows to enclose land, as their thorny boughs make a sturdy barrier; an old Cornish expression is “thick as haglets” (the Cornish name for hawthorne), and the branches have a history in Mayday rituals. These trees will also be found in woodlands (especially at the edges) and on waysides.

There are many dangerous red berries, so make sure you identify hawthorne correctly (use a guide or someone whose experience you trust). The fruit (which ripens through September) is a bright red to dark purple, and also enjoyed by many birds. The texture when ripe is akin to the texture of avocado. The seeds must not be eaten because they produce cyanide in the intestines; a couple aren't deadly to an adult but could be to a child. You can cook the berries then discard the seeds, or just eat around them raw. The taste is like starchy over-ripe apple, and while some are tasty enough to use in their own right, their high pectin content makes them popular to add to other fruit that you want to jelly; just-ripe berries have the most pectin, over-ripe berries the least.

Here in Britain hawthorne is one of our real medicinal treasure-trove plants. Traditionally, this plant was used to treat hypertension and cardiac failure. Both of these are prevalent killers in western societies, especially Britain. In diverse places such as Devon, the Isle of Man, and the Highlands of Scotland, hawthorne has traditionally been used in folk medicine as a primary heart tonic, as well as being used for centuries to correctly balance high and low blood pressure (it's actually a beta blocker, improving nutrition, energy reserves, and energy release of the heart muscle). The berries are astringent and useful to cure sore throats once they've been cooked in water for a while. It may also break calcium and cholesterol deposits in the arteries, making it helpful for arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). It's also rich in Vitamin C and anti-oxidants, promoting the scavenging of harmful 'free radical' molecules.

At this time of year, there tend not to be as many thorns as earlier in the season and any still present grow at a 45 degree angle away from the trunk. The advantage of this is that you can run your hand along a branch from base to tip and collect a good handful of berries with very few prickles.

As well as eating or stewing, you can mash them through your hands to remove the seeds (although very time-consuming) and then dry out the paste into a sweet fruit leather that will keep for years.

Due to their association with fairies, it has been considered very bad fortune to cut hawthorne. Especially in Celtic mythology, myth abounds of humans being laylaid by such creatures to places where time passes differently. Into this century in Ireland, public works have been diverted due to reluctance to tamper with this tree.

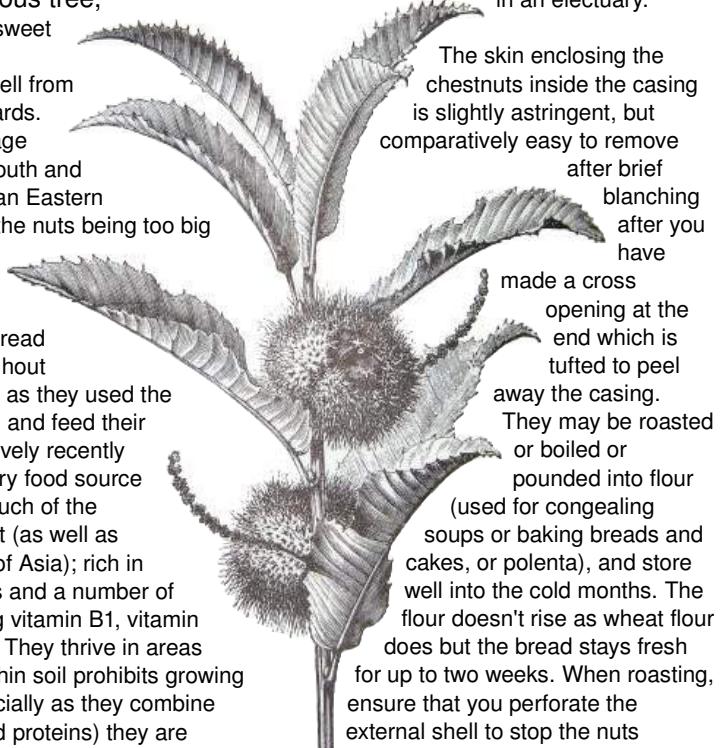
### Sweet Chestnuts

Another deciduous tree, the nuts fall from sweet chestnut in their densely-spiked shell from mid-October onwards. After the last ice-age forced the trees south and stranded them in an Eastern European valley (the nuts being too big for birds or the wind to disseminate), the Roman Empire spread them again throughout temperate Europe as they used the nut to make bread and feed their horses. Until relatively recently they were a primary food source for rural poor in much of the southern continent (as well as Turkey and parts of Asia); rich in starch, natural oils and a number of vitamins, including vitamin B1, vitamin B2 and vitamin C. They thrive in areas where the rocky, thin soil prohibits growing grains, and (especially as they combine carbohydrates and proteins) they are nutritionally superior to the above and can replace them in the diet.

There is records of chestnuts being used in western medicine as far back as the ancient Greeks. Eating them not only will improve the blood (in atrophy, fatigue, starvation) but also will increase the energy and it will supply the body with natural sugars that will squeeze out the desire for sweets (though they're not recommended more than 4-5 times a week) and the high dietary fibre can prevent diabetes and improve digestion. It will also balance cholesterol, decrease inflammation all through the body, and lower the risk of blood clots building up in the body. This will eventually lower your risk of stroke, heart attack and coronary heart disease to a large degree. The magnesium present in sweet chestnut forms the hard enamel around your teeth



and protects the bones from degeneration and decay. The B vitamins also strengthen the nerves. Once dried, with both the casing and the inner skin removed, the nuts can be beaten into a powder reputed to cure coughs when combined with honey in an electuary.



The nuts have a history of eating to encourage fertility and sexual desire and may be carried as a charm by women who wish to conceive. Staves made from chestnut wood are said to encourage longevity, increase energy, enhance intuition and help with grounding and centering of energy. In Japan (where they are eaten on New Year's day for success and strength the coming year) they symbolise both difficulties and overcoming them.

# POEMS FOR LOVE, LOSS & WAR

## 'Outward is Inward to the Heart'

The Old Ones say  
outward is inward to the heart  
and inward is outward to the center  
because  
for us  
there are no absolute boundaries  
no borders  
no environments  
no outside  
no inside  
no dualisms  
no single body  
no non-body

We don't stop at our eyes  
We don't begin at our skin  
We don't end at our smell  
We don't start at our sounds

I can lose my legs  
and go on living  
I can lose my eyes  
and go on living  
I can lose my ears  
and go on living  
I can lose my hair  
my nose

my hands  
my arms  
and go on living

but if I lose the water

I die  
If I lose the Sun

I die  
If I lose the plants and animals

I die  
For all these things  
are more a part of me  
more essential to my being  
than is that  
which I call "my body."

A mountain for seeking visions,  
An ocean for getting dreams,  
A lake of mirrors to give us names,  
Sacred Circles around us.

Black Elk has told us that  
at the Center of the Universe  
dwells Wakan-Tanka  
the Great Holy,  
and yes, that Sacred Center  
is within each of us, as with  
Huehuetéotl, the Sacred Fire,  
in the Center of the sweatlodge.  
And we know that our eyes are  
not windows,  
that indeed we do not  
"see" the world at a distance,  
that our "seeing" is within  
our heads, within our minds.

For if the eyes were windows  
we could pick up a dead creature's  
eye and look directly through it  
like clear glass  
but any hunter knows  
it can't be done.

The visions we find on the mountain-top  
inward they are looking in dreams  
outward they are looking for signs  
but both inward  
and outward  
do not leave us  
for we are not separate  
we are like the atomic nuclei  
which cannot be studied  
except in motion  
because motion is of their essence  
and we cannot be studied  
alone  
*for we do not exist alone.*



— Jack D. Forbes

## Bone-blade In Their Right Hand, Acorns In Their Left



That figure on the hillside  
In their right hand they hold a knife carved from bone  
In their left hand they hold a sack full of acorns

People would look upon the figure in confusion and distrust  
"Who is this being who's footprints leave runes in the ground?  
Who calls to the hawk, deer and fox, that answer them back?

They could not be a man, for their claws and teeth, yet they run across the surface of the earth  
like a man!"

This is what people would say when discussing this being

Often they would only catch a glimpse, as the creature ran through the town at night  
Children would lie and claim they had seen it in its home in the forest past the hills, but  
children are clumsy and noisy, and the creature hides itself from them

For the creature, though a trickster, saboteur and thief, was not so cruel as to frighten children  
But never without their knife, the creature would use the bone blade to pick locks, to steal what  
was stolen, and to sabotage the machines of the towns people

For this being is vengeful and takes delight in ludic vengeance against those who cut down the  
forest, ploughed the land, dammed the river and stole their friends homes

One day though the creature lead the children away from the town, so it could enter with them  
far away and safe from the flames they unleashed, after freeing imprisoned wild horses, in  
revenge of the barbaric engagement and all those other acts

The mothers and fathers were alerted by the creatures call, but nothing could be done to save  
the town, which burned to the ground

And after the children return to find their parents safe, they all stare at the figure on the hill

Who in their right hand they hold a knife carved from bone

And in their left hand they hold a sack full of acorns

— Julian Langer

## Crying in the Rain

Crying in the rain.  
Feeding cycles of mist and dew, sweat and blood, rearranging vapors that  
permeate and bind.

Cycles feeding cellulose, lignin, flesh. Rainfall, that drifting water sanctum.  
Cast a stone into the waters, watch the ripple of its waves.  
Even a single drop can still add up to so much. Liquid echoes.  
In cleansing rain, wash it all away.

The torments of the past, the fears of the future. Wash it all away.

Redeeming torrent.

Re-surface, head above the waters.

Take the next breath.

Still alive.

Surviving.

— autumnleavescascade



# GLOBAL FLASH- POINTS

**Philadelphia, U.S.A.:** "On a warm spring night, we went to a construction site where there was once a wild and abandoned place. We did what we could to hinder the progress that has befallen that area: removing survey stakes and dividers, stealing and destroying pieces of what was being built, and smashing the machines that homogenize and commodify the land. We don't know what they intend to build on the site and we don't care. Any domestication of wild places infuriates us. We took this action as a contribution to the month for the earth and against capital."

**08.06.16, Mexico:** "At 4am, while so-called mexico city was blanketed by police, pollution, and restless capitalism, 320 birds and 3 foxes were liberated from Mercado Sonora, a crowded distribution point of nonhuman creatures kidnapped from their homes and crammed into horrid conditions of human negligence. All the human-labeled bird species that spread their wings, such as *Amazilia beryllina*, *Aquila chrysaetos*, and *Pharomachrus Mocinno*, are found within the bioregions of 'mexico'; and so, we are hoping, they have great chance of returning to their perch, or at least finding a viable new one where they can rest and continue to exercise their colorful existence. The foxes were tended to by a comrade and transported to their bioregions where, once released, began to frolic once again in rejuvenation. [...] Everyday we choose how we interact with our surroundings. Everyday there is a creature trembling in the corner of a cage. Everyday a sprout is pushing against concrete. Let us not forget our potential to act upon our values. Whether it is spreading stories and inspiration, nourishing seeds, or slipping on a mask and quietly opening doors... etc... we ALL have a role in the fight for liberation. In instinctual insurrection, Transborder Animal Liberation"

**28.06.16, Bristol, U.K.:** As a continuation of the *Phoenix Project* (see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg45), fire is set at an Avonmouth police depot. "The depot also stores crowd control barricade units, CCTV vans, staff support and military vehicles occasionally. We dedicate the action to the imprisoned members of the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire and Aggeliki Spyropoulou, as well as to those in the

attempted escape case [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; 'Yet Another Fenced World'*]. This action is for the imprisoned comrades in UK, Greece, Chile, Russia, Poland, Czech Republic, France, Spain, Italy and around the world. War to the 'Smart Cities'

[ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg31] and the prison-society. Long live anarchy and the wild."

**05.07.16, Greece:** "On June 22nd 2016 the German police bastards once again raided the Rigaer 94 squat after the whole Nordkiez area had been declared a 'danger zone' with permanent controls and police presence. However they have failed to contain the conflict in this corner of Berlin [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; A Comrade in Prison*]. [As a gesture of complicity] and within the framework of the call for a Black July, we took a stroll in Kolonaki (a posh area in the center of Athens) and began indiscriminately burning cars with the intention of the fire spreading uncontrollably to as many vehicles as possible." *Claimed by F.A.I./E.L.F. [Informal Anarchist Federation / Earth Liberation Front] 'Chaotic Behavior in Constant Revolt'*.

**06.08.16, Bristol, U.K.:** 'Eco-Anarchist Vandals' visit Easton-in-Gordano service station: "whilst the truck drivers were inactive in their cabs, 10-15 cars on four car-transporters were spray-painted causing their greedy earth-destroying companies loss of time and money infinitely larger than that we expended doing this opportunist crime. Solidarity to all the imprisoned comrades and those on the run."

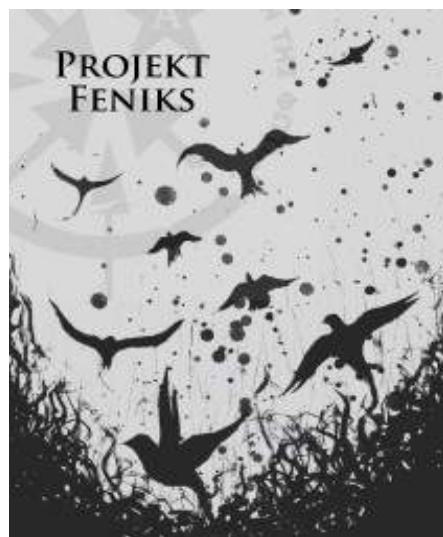
**West Lothian, U.K.:** A masked group torch three screws cars in daylight at HMP Addiewell, fleeing in a car later found burnt out 20 miles away in Edinburgh.



weeks earlier, five youth armed with clubs fought screws and scaled the 30ft fences with ladders stolen from a storeroom, but had been returned after an armed police operation.

**Magdeburg, Germany:** "Saxony-Anhalt has problems in recruiting new cops. Next year, they need to hire up to 700 instead of the current 350. The minister of the interior and the police union agree on the fact that there is a lack of "suitable candidates". [...] September 9, under the slogan "A long night Festive Arrest at 'Sternstraße 12' crime scene – at the station" the cops will practise new forms of public relations and recruitment attempts. [...] While in other parts of the building "daily operations" continue, in others there's a party. In a relaxed party atmosphere police training flyers are distributed. For children, there is a "Sherlock-Tour" for taking specimens of traces and clues. For the older ones, it's GAV [volunteer cops]. That includes reconstructed scenes and explanations of what is necessary, "when the person refuses." The event is organized in close collaboration with the "Kulturanker" association, which is organizing the festive evening (voluntarily). While all are calling for more cops, we have begun their disposal. [...] "Almost the entire fleet of federal police vehicles was destroyed by fire in Magdeburg" (From an article in the regional press)[...] Wednesday to Thursday night, September 8, [s]even police vehicles parked at the Magdeburg central station went up in smoke, as well as eleven 'Deutsche Bahn' vehicles. The press writes that the damage is estimated at 750,000 euros. Why the 'Deutsche Bahn'? We remember 2014, when the DB provided the Nazis with extra trains to take them directly from the central station to the 'SKET' industrial park. We remember the propaganda hostile to unions against the railway workers' strike last year. We remember the 'CASTOR' transportation train when the DB made its railways available to the nuclear industry. We remember the transport for the German Army, from military post to armoured vehicles." *This East German area is no stranger to such attacks; in 2012, 12 brand new police cars were set on fire in the state capital. Two days later, police cars parked at a police station in Halle were set on fire.*

**26.09.16, Cañete, Chile:** Police headquarters holding the anarchist Joaquín



García (just captured after being underground; see **Return Fire** vol.4 pg72) are attacked with pyrotechnics. Part of a string of anti-vivisection, meat industry and bank vandalisms (and a railway blockade) coordinated across the length of Chile by 'Freely Associated Action' of the Earth & Animal Liberation Front (E.L.F. / A.L.F.) cells.

**Ontario, Canada:** "So back when Enbridge started shipping in pipeline segments for their line 10 expansion [ed. – for tar sands crude; see **Return Fire** vol.4 pg29], we started sabotaging

them. There are vast networks of pipeline infrastructure throughout Turtle Island ['North America']. They are indefensible; perfect opportunities for effective direct action that harms nothing but an oil company's bottom line. It's in this spirit that we found ourselves going

for long moonlit strolls through the trenches of the freshly dug line 10 right-of-way. Wherever we felt the urge, we drilled various sized holes into pipeline segments while spilling corrosives inside others. We do this in solidarity with the Indigenous peoples of this area. [...]

And lastly, but not least, to our comrades and co-conspirators:

A How-To from the heart  
You'll need 1) a decent cordless drill, 2) a good smaller-gauge cobalt or titanium drill bit – preferably with a pilot point, and 3) cutting oil. (Oh, the irony!)

With a righteous sense of adventure, prove your stealth ninja skills by getting into the right-of-way. Once you're in there you're pretty invisible from the road so long as you're not fluorescent, adorned in glitter or fucking around with a headlamp too much. Take a breath, take a look, and then find your way to an empty pipeline and start drilling! Go

slow (so there's less noise, reverberation, and friction) and apply enough pressure so that you see metal shavings coming up – and then keep at it for 10 to 15 minutes. Cutting oil will help the process along by keeping the drill tip cool and effective.

Have fun."

**U.S.A.:** "Last week, we decided to ring in Kara Wild's trial in Paris [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; New Accusations After Damien Kidnapped & Beaten**] by raining the streets of Chicago with shattered glass and popping a cop tire for each month that she has spent in prison. The windows of yuppie shops on the thoroughly gentrified north side stood tall and vulnerable to our hammers. The tires of sheriff cars, brazenly

parked on residential streets, challenged us to immobilize them. [...] Broken windows and popped tires are love letters to circulate between us. Never mind quantifying how much these acts hurt our enemies. By pulling up our masks and smashing their storefronts, we open up that beautiful space in which we can become ourselves, where nothing is sacred but the ties that bind us and the disgust we share for their miserable world."

**02.10.16, Chevilles, Switzerland:** At the construction of a new migrant detention facility where "authorities want to hold people prisoners in order to drive them to the border quickly and unnoticed[...] we have fractured the lock of an exit door to the drill two holes and forced access to the building. Each of the seven floors, we opened the water pipes to cause flooding. Damage had to delay the work underway and inflate the invoice of the dirty work of the authorities and the companies who benefit."

**03.10.16, Montevideo, Uruguay:** "Death to Nazism, fascism, communism and democracy. Always anarchists." *Arson attack against the home of Oscar Piquinela, secretary of the Inter-Parliamentary Uruguayan Group, an official at the Legislative Palace who was displaying neo-Nazi insignia on his balcony.* "[That a state agency official] does not have a problem with expressing ideas as rancid as Nazism, is sufficient evidence that ideas supposedly antagonistic like democracy and Nazism can coexist. Let's not forget that in Germany the Nazi party came to power through the electoral appeal of the Republican democracy. Both share authoritarian and marginalizing behaviors. Democracy with its innocent mask of tolerance and classic discourse of 'social peace' also has a past and present endorsement that is stained in blood, just ask the parents who have lost children at the hands of the democratic police [ed. – see **We Can Be Worse Still**], or just ask the social and anti-social fighters who have been persecuted, beaten and imprisoned..."

**09.10.16, Porto, Portugal:** *Graffiti and damages against the headquarters of construction firm Vinci, in solidarity with the Z.A.D. (see **Return Fire** vol.1 pg81).*

**15.10.16, Edinburgh, U.K.:** "We don't tolerate any non-human individuality to be the subject of control of the faithful of the Law, lovers of the society of prisons." *Arson of a van of Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, by 'Nocturnal Gale'.* "This law abiding fossil, "controls" the "wellbeing" of non-human animals by removing the "defective" ones who would taint the sterilized cage of the worshipers of the Law.

When an animal is hurt (not fatally) inside the necropolis, and is categorized by the ghost of the Law as non-native for the ghost of the Nation [ed. – see **Return Fire** vol.4 pg30], then it is killed as an indication of "mercy" from the executors of "humanity" [...] Even if someone wanted to take a wounded animal to a vet for nursing there is a fine for those who treat animals that are not "native" for returning them to the "wild" (namely in the public gardens of the city). The stupidity, the excessively willing obedience downgrading the life of an individuality into a worn out product, and the hypocrisy of caring in the name of the ruin of "animal welfare", or the real feeling of caring channeled through institutionalized thinking of morality and the Law trigger our hate and these people are our enemies. The paradoxical anthropocentric caring for non-human individuals is a contemptible chain for us because it doesn't emerge from an interest of fully engaging with ones own relations outside of rationalized contexts[...] We aren't saying that these people don't save lives of animals in different cases or help them in general contexts, we don't present them as we "would like" to attack them in ideological frames but we attack them for what they are. Parts of the societal machine who work well with the capital and the ideologicalization of the pet business..."

**16.10.16, São Paulo, Brazil:** 7 wards of a psychiatric prison burned in an uprising; 55 inmates escape into the countryside.

**19.10.16, Athens, Greece:** *Statement from a crew who "took part, alongside many other groups and individualities, in the street clashes around the Polytechnic in Exarchia [ed. – see **The Exarchia Commune Rises & Defends Itself**], that lasted for several hours with constant attacks with molotovs, stones and fireworks against antiriot police squads. [...] But we don't want to limit ourselves in a routine of anticop hate; along with the attacks against the cops, we promote the practice of attack against the structures and symbols of domination, from the most obvious like banks and ministries, to those urban elements that serve the normal function of the metropolis: road signs, traffic lights, cameras, bus stops... as well the representations, symbols and idols of Power in the form of icons, monuments, statues[...]* We don't see anarchic violence as a sacrifice or as a revolutionary obligation; instead, we demystify it, we turn it into a banality, we use it in a ludic way, making it obtainable for everybody, without professionalisms or restrictions."

**U.K.:** *Four separate car dealerships hit by anonymous arson attacks in the Salisbury area; in each case the technique is placing a flammable device under the wheel arch.*



**Montréal, Canada:** "In response to the recent smashings of gentrifiers in the neighbourhood [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg91*], and in the context of twenty-two businesses being vandalized in the last year, the city and the police have publicly announced a renewed collaboration. They're desperately trying to reassert control, faced with people who "aren't afraid of the police", and their initiative to install more cameras shows it. [...] Over the last few months, friends have been playing Camover in the neighbourhood of Hochelaga. We've destroyed around twenty security cameras. For your pleasure (and certainly for our own as well!), here's a photo in which we see a friend sporting a necklace of optical trophies. [...] We decided to play, and will continue this game of revolt, which is simultaneously thrilling and frightening, where we learn to overcome fears, deal with stress, and expand our capacities, because this is ultimately about more than the gentrification of a particular neighborhood. What's happening in Hochelaga speaks to a history of struggle against domination as old as civilization itself: a multiplicity of wild and uncontrollable worlds that resist and evade the world of order and 'progress'."

**London, U.K.:** Report via [325.nostate.net](http://325.nostate.net), shortly after an anti-gentrification demo led to a brawl between Class War activists and Foxton estate agents; "Class War London opened up a water main outside gated estate agents Foxtons, which flooded dozens of expensive multi-million pound homes in a posh area. 100s of people had to be evacuated and the cost of the damage is extensive. Boris Johnson, the ex-mayor and now foreign secretary also had his basement flooded by waters which were reported to be up to 2 metres deep in the surrounding streets. The rich people were reported to have been taken to some kind of refugee camp for the upper class." Turns out 'devastate the avenues of the rich' was more than a slogan all along!



10.12.16, Tyneside, U.K.: Anarchist attack smashes police car windscreens.

**Wrexham, U.K.:** "It is important to announce one week before the opening of HMP Berwyn that two of the houseblocks in the prison are structurally unsound due to sabotage in 2015. After our action in May 2015 [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg60*] [we] knew that to regularly attempt to attack the prison would be impossible due to the prison walls being built around the site. After intensive research, it soon became apparent that we could have a dramatic effect with little effort. In July 2015, a strong acidic powder was poured into the excavations of the groundfloor slabs of two of the prison's houseblocks. This has made two of these buildings structurally unsound – their foundations will eventually crumble and the buildings could collapse over time. Given that the strength of these slabs has been greatly reduced, intrusive investigations and a full re-build of these houseblocks would be necessary before attempting to

**02 & 07.02.17, Leipzig, Germany:** "We have wandered far and wide.

We have seen the beauty of natural chaos deep within ancient woodlands and amongst the weeds that crack the concrete. In the solitude of the mountain tops and in the silent encounters with other nocturnal individuals stalking in the night. When sharpening our knives in the shadows of the forests and conspiring around campfires with our fierce accomplices, those with whom we share the desire to break out of the cages of our domestication and become feral beings.

We have witnessed first-hand the devastation that the kingdom of "humanity" wreaks on the earthly environment, we have stood on the edges of vast and desolate quarries, we have walked through the clear cut forests and along the oil-slicked beaches strewn with plastic and the corpses of fishes and birds, feeling the hatred and anger building up inside us more and more like the blackness that gathers in our lungs. We have seen the horrors inside the factory farms and we each knew then in our hearts that liberation alone could never be enough.

We have set off incendiaries, torching the machines and infrastructure that annihilate the wild, momentarily paralyzing the norms and procedures of civilized order. We have launched attacks on the employees of ecocidal companies by daylight and moonlight, feeling more alive than ever as they fled before our knives, molotovs and stones. Our acts of vandalism have caused powercuts and severed internet and telephone connections to countless homes and businesses. We have rioted with criminal intent that does not stop at merely breaking a few windows and our rabid hands move to steal every necessity for our survival that comes within reach.

We are amoral, illegalist, antisocial and unrepentant individualists at war with techno-industrial society [...] With courage and determination we continue to practice new techniques in the application of the destructive arts, improving our methods of sabotage, attack and evasion. As we will stop at nothing, our attacks will erupt asymmetrically as we scurry from shadow to shadow and our fires will continue to spread... "Cluster of Vodafone antennae located and, "covering the bottom of the exposed cables in flammable gel and then placing two slow-burning incendiaries between the cables", destroyed. "Mobile phone antennas, besides functioning as important pieces of technical infrastructure for the smooth-functioning of society and the process of mass stupification also emit massive amounts of toxicity in the form of radiowaves and microwaves, resulting in tumors and brain damage in creatures dwelling nearby and are known to interfere with the navigational senses of birds and insects, leading to mass die-offs of entire colonies of bees and thus causing irreparable damage to existing ecosystems." Part of the same group also "destroyed 7 hunting towers and when I was finished, my desire was asking for more. More moments of silent activities between the singing of the birds." Six cars burn.

"When we first began claiming some of our acts of destruction as the Wildfire Cell, we also associated our little gang with the ALF, ELF and FAI as part of a final experiment in communication between other interesting individualities within the "Anarchist" camp who we were not in direct contact with. Then in our second communiqué we abandoned

the use of these acronyms and spoke briefly about some of our motivations for doing so. [...] We retained the name of the cell to mark clearly our departure from [the] hypocritical idea of fighting for an external goal or cause, for some better future or mystified idol. [O]ur acts of destruction are acts tending towards our self-liberation. Acts which aim to break the chains that society has forced upon us from birth and create the potential to escape the great cage momentarily by decivilizing ourselves and becoming dangerous. [...] We are not saying that all who call themselves "anarchists" fall into this ideological trap, there are still some unique ones who claim this "identity" for themselves, that is their discretion. Amongst these few we proudly count some of our close allies and accomplices."

cage people in these buildings. This action is dedicated to every human being that has died in the prison system at the hands of the State."

**U.K.: Vodafone mobile phone mast burned** "in front of Kenneth Steele House, the serious crimes unit of Bristol police near Temple Meads train station in Bristol. This is not only a hit to the company but to the pride of the cops and their facade of control." *The comrades also sabotaged a car of G4S*, "a massive global private security company that run a number of private prisons, including youth prisons and migration centres. [...] It was the state who came to their rescue when HMP Birmingham (privately operated by G4S) saw explosive riots... [ed. – see **We Are Not Afraid of Their Ruins... We Carry a New Chaos in Our Hearts.**]"

**22.03.17, Grenoble, France:** "Wednesday night we were not tired so we went hunting for collaborators." *3 vehicles of the Communal Center for Social Action set on fire.* "The C.C.A.S co-manages misery, thus giving a moral guarantee to democracy [ed. – see **Who Is It?**]. This social policy seems to us more dangerous even than the blows of truncheons of their colleagues in uniform. All cops are not in blue [...] integration is a form of incarceration."

**18.04.17, Liège, Belgium:** ' "Don't you have a light?" & friend' "set fire to a police station [which] was completely destroyed[...] We dedicate this action to the imprisoned comrades who are accused of bank robbery in Aachen [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; Aachen Case Verdict**]" and "the Montreuil compa and Damien [ed. – see **Rebels Behind Bars; New Accusations After Damien Kidnapped & Beaten**]..."

**30.06.17, Chile:** *20 molotovs* wreck offices of the Agricultural & Livestock Service and General Directorate of Civil Aeronautics, "in the context of the month for anarchic agitation for Earth liberation[...] The other motivation for our actions are the recent deaths of the *weichafes* (Mapuche [ed. – see **We Can Be Worse Still**] warriors) Patricio González and Luis Marileo[...] IMMEDIATE FREEDOM FOR THE MAPUCHE POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO WITH GREAT STRENGTH AND COURAGE WENT ON HUNGER STRIKE [ed. – see **We Can Be Worse Still**], AS WELL AS FREEDOM FOR ALL THE PRISONERS OF WAR –

BEING SUBVERSIVE IN THE FACE OF THIS SYSTEM IS NOT TERRORISM, IT IS SURVIVAL."



"Down with the Anti-Terrorism Law: freedom for Mapuche & anarchist prisoners", "Strength compa" (left: in Spanish, right: in Mapudugun)

**04.05.17, Indonesia:** "Prostitutes, in collaboration with our non-prostitute illegalist comrades, yesterday undertook an action [not] undertaken exclusively by prostitutes, [but] at the initiative of a prostitute. [...] A prostitute had the opportunity to service a member of the Central Jakarta Military Police, and subsequently identify this SOCIAL WAR CRIMINAL'S home address (and penchant for smoking methamphetamine). In revolt at the social war criminal's blatant hypocrisy, the prostitute passed pertinent information onto their so-call "criminal" comrades, all of whom have been similarly persecuted by those who we recognize as the most reviled foot soldiers of fascism. We recognise these State thugs as directly complicit and responsible for the innumerable arbitrarily beatings, sexual assaults, prison sentences, harassment, and extortion we have all experienced for engaging in the same so-called "vices" these repulsive hypocrites enthusiastically embrace (and indeed profit from, personally and systemically)."

[...] Using their PRO-fessional wiles and skills, the prostitute filmed the encounter and undertook a covert assessment of goods which could be easily liberated from the dog's home. The prostitute also identified when the dog would be engaged in his job of torturing our friends and comrades, and when his home would ostensibly be empty of his (presumably long-suffering) wife, lowly paid domestic slaves, and children.

Hence, with the knowledge of the dog's long holiday weekend plans, a team of us visited the dog's house to ensure it was empty. With ease, we were able to gain access. Once inside, we joyfully and mischievously liberated and expropriated as many of the social war criminal's expensive and ostensibly highly prized possessions as we were able to transport.

In addition to loathing uniformed dogs, we undertook this action to provide anonymous resources to several informal networks of similar minded insurrectionists and anarchists we have enduring solidarity and respect for (and several of us participate in). We felt it was similarly essential to provide material support, solidarity and resources to our friends currently incarcerated in spirit-crushing local prisons.

Post successful-action, we collectively decided that the ultimate mockery would be to sell the goods we expropriated back to members of State apparatuses due to their inherent corruption, petty scams and culture of extortion. In Jakarta, our enemies in the cops, military, special forces, and 'human' drones working for State departments, are primarily of the reviled, aspirational moneyed class. Seemingly those of this ilk share a desperate penchant for parading their consumer 'goods' as an affirmation of their existential identities. [...] Hence, to our amusement and contempt, we are confident the last place they will investigate in searching for the liberated property is each other."

**22.07.17, London, U.K.:** Masked youth raise a burning barricade in the north of the city outside the shop Rashan Charles was suffocated to death in by pursuing cops, and attack the riot squad when they arrive with projectiles, forcing three retreats and trashing a bank and other businesses. Fireworks launched at police helicopter. Earlier the same month, London police's killing of Edir Frederico Da Costa in a stop-search also led to rioting and cops in the hospital.

**23.09.17, Melbourne, Australia:** "15 queer anarchists (including sex workers, drug users, disabled people, people living with blood borne viruses and survivors of child abuse & spiritual abuse perpetrated by fundamentalist christians & churches) disrupted and intervened in the launch of the national Coalition For Marriage campaign. The Coalition For Marriage is a front group for the fundamentalist religious organisation, the Australian Christian Lobby [whose members have worked with racist right-wing groups]. [...] In an attempt to deprive the religious fundamentalists of a platform, and to make their event as uncomfortable as possible, we engaged in a series of constant disruptions, beginning with two people unfurling a banner reading "Burn Churches, Not Queers" as the 1000 strong supporters of Christian fundamentalist ideology entered the venue." *The Christians homophobic speeches were interrupted (with slogans and enthusiastic kissing among the anarchists), and the merchandise table upset. Mainstream media report the intervention as "domestic terrorism", and some pacifistic 'anarchist' groups also distance themselves...*

**21-22.11.17, Aragón, Spain:** Letter-bombs (accompanied by instructions to leave the premises and alert the police; presumably the devices were timed) delivered to the Italian Chamber of Commerce and three branches of an Italian insurance company. Following controlled detonations after evacuation, two turned out to be fake. Though press report a responsibility claim they received from anarchists, they decline to cite the signature. One possible reason the comrade/s of *anarhija.info* brought up was that it was the work of "hypothetically 'dismantled' comrades, which could interfere with future or ongoing investigations..." Around this time, a major anti-anarchist trial is due to start in Italy (see **Rebels Behind Bars; A Letter from Anarchist Comrade Anna Beniamino about Operation Scripta Manent & More...**)

# REBELS BEHIND BARS

– text by prisoners & repression news

## A Comrade in Prison

(Germany)

On October 18th 2017, the trial against our friend and comrade Nero took place at the Amtsgericht in Moabit. He was charged with blinding a police helicopter with a laser pointer. On that night [June 16th], a concert was taking place in Rigaerstraße<sup>[1]</sup>, which led to riots in the streets. Nero was arrested in the Südkiez in Friedrichshain, assaulted in the police station and let go again the next morning. **A month later, civil cops where waiting at his work place and arrested him upon his arrival.** Since then it has been three months he has been in custody in the JVA Moabit.

Cops where already waiting in front of the court house in the Turmstraße and civil cops where snooping around the neighbourhood, to harass visitors. Press and police witnesses had gathered in front of the court room. The trial was supposed to start at 9:20 AM, though it took over an hour before the press and visitors where allowed inside. After having read out the charges, the judge declared, that a deal had been agreed upon, stating that the sentence should not be over 20 months, should the defendant admit to the charges that is. **The confession included the blinding of the helicopter with the intention to support the riots in the Rigaerstraße.** These charges can legally be met with 1-15 years in prison. With a simple "yes" under pressure, the sentence was set between 16 and 20 months.

Afterwards the pilot was called to the stand. Angelo Koepp is not only a pilot but also a great actor. Obviously, he had practiced his performance many times, to create dramatic scenes, in order for our friend to receive a harsh punishment. Without naming any sources, he talked about a long-term disabled colleague, who allegedly after a similar attack still requires a reading aid. He also explains, that usually the helicopters are only equipped with one pilot. But as chance might have it, during all the laser pointer attacks, two pilots where on board to prevent a crash. Angelo was not shy about imagining catastrophic scenes in case of a helicopter crash by explaining how the 330 liters of kerosene, that where still in the tank could have created a monstrous fire ball. Strange, how when two helicopters collided at the Olympic stadium, no such fire ball could be seen, even though a lot more kerosene was in play then. Only the steep angle, with which the laser was pointed at the helicopter, prevented such a disastrous fire ball.

and afterwards return to Rigaerstraße. Already before the shift that night, they had been told to expect attacks with laser pointers in the Rigaerstraße. Just as well, since the helicopters have been terrorizing the neighbourhood for decades and it's not just the squatters who are fed up with it. Coming to an end, the witness was asked to name the number of operations carried out in the Rigaerstraße. Claiming he was lacking permission to testify, he refused an answer. After finishing his performance, Angelo joined the irritated visitors, to follow the rest of the trial. After that everyone agreed, that it was unnecessary to hear any more witnesses. Only one friend was heard by the judge. He stated that Nero was staying at his place and was in fact not homeless but just one of the many people in this city in trouble of finding an apartment and, being a worker, has limited time to stand in an endless line at the Bürgeramt to officially register [as homeless]. Apart from a couple of stupid questions from the jury, there was nothing left to say and the judge retreated until the proclamation of sentence.

When the doors to room 101 opened again, all the cop witnesses had occupied the visitors seats, even though they were no longer needed. The three cops who had been in the helicopter and Mr. Habedank, the director of LKA [ed. – State Criminal Police Office of Interior Ministry] 5, who did not mind to show several visitors that he knows exactly who they were. Everyone was excitingly awaiting the sentence. During the proclamation of sentence, the judge did not miss the chance to give a seemingly endless moral speech towards the audience. He integrated all the horror scenarios, that had been brought up by the pilot in his sentence. **He agreed with the prosecutors demand of 18 months in prison, without parole, since that would only give Nero the chance to continue his fight against the police.** We hope that he will fight this struggle in there, just as successfully as he did it out here. Lastly the judge decided against letting Nero out for a while before his sentence started. He also held another long moral speech before he proclaimed his decision, saying that since our friend did not apologize for his actions, there was danger for repetition and his missing rent contract was taken as a flight risk.

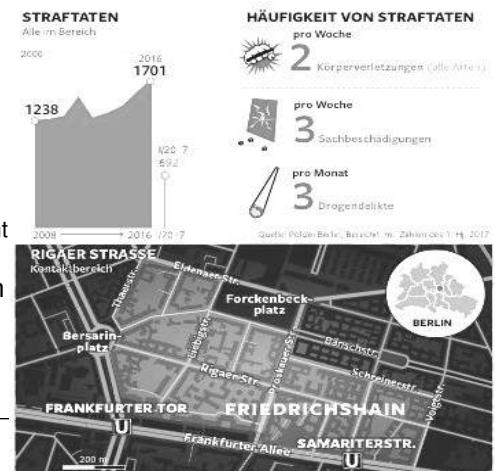
Therefore our friend is and will stay in prison.

*Blow up the prisons, blow up the palaces, blow up the pigs!*

1. ed. – This article refers to the situation in a neighbourhood of Berlin that has long been a

This way the pilots were able to follow Nero, arrest him

hub of radical activity in that city (including the semi-autonomous spaces on Rigaerstraße street). Shortly after this court-report, 'Comrades and friends of Rigaer 94 and the resistance in Friedrichshain' released a text we will quote to contextualise the situation there: "In Berlin it is forbidden to organize a flea market, where everything can be given away for free, it is forbidden to play music in public spaces or just gather in the street with many people. It might be allowed if one requests a permission with the police. We did all of these things without having a permission and every time we did, the police came and attacked us. As a response, many stones were thrown towards the cops and their cars. [...] Due to gentrification, the population in our part of the city, is being slowly replaced. If you don't have the money, you can't pay the rent anymore and you have to move. This is why several luxury cars and new investors are being attacked in our neighbourhoods. [...] When the state attacks us, like last year, when the cops raided the Rigaer 94 twice and once occupied the house for over three weeks, while destroying large parts of it, it becomes possible for us to mobilize many people from outside our circles. For weeks over the summer 2016, cars all over the city were burning and during a bigger demonstration many people attacked the cops. [...] The autonomous movement was fueled in the '80s by the difficult housing situation and the many squats, that existed all over the city. **The experiences since then show us that as soon as we take one step backwards the enemy moves up right behind us.** In the cases, where squatters negotiated with the state, they always lost. In the cases, where we did not negotiate, we may have also lost, but by fighting the struggle we won new activists for our structures. As a realistic stop over, we are trying to make one part of the city impossible to control, a process which should be expanded chronologically and spatially. Maybe the cops will attack our spaces in Friedrichshain again in the near future. Then we will ask you for help, by attacking authority, no matter where you are." Police have designated the area a 'Danger Zone', which allows them stop-and-search from people without reason, breaking into homes without a search warrant and confiscating everything, and periodically there is media hysteria, comparing the place to Syria and other nonsense. It seems like many of the same problems are faced by comrades in Berlin as in many other cities of Europe and the world at this moment, with the right hand of State repression and the left hand of rising living prices pushes the conflictive zones against the wall and starts to funnel them out of the centers. **We wish fortitude upon the fighters of Friedrichshain in the confrontations to come!**



## New Accusations After Damien Kidnapped & Beaten [& letter] (France)

During the night of July 29-30th, anarchist comrade Damien Camélio was ambushed by cops as he was leaving the hospital he had just checked his collapsed partner (now recovered) into, in Saint-Malo, Brittany. Here is part of his account: "When I got outside the hospital a cop car was parked in front of me and four cops were waiting for me next to the car.

*They yelled: "Hey Camélio, give us your papers so we can check them."*

*I had nothing to hide so I handed them over. A cop asked me: "Are you carrying a weapon?" to which I replied that yes, of course, I always have a knife on me. He asked me to show him it. I took it out and he snatched it from my hands while the other three cops jumped on me at the same time.*

*I was thrown onto the ground, my hands were cuffed behind my back and they then beat me to the point where I was having trouble breathing. I tried to struggle a bit because it was really too much and at the time I was afraid they would kill me. They strangled me so much that I lost consciousness. When I woke up the blows were still raining down on me."*

After 36 hours in custody the comrade was released with serious injuries and an order to attend court on charges of contempt of authority and resisting arrest. After hospital treatment, he was diagnosed with a major fracture of the right hand requiring 42 days of intensive therapy and a perforated right eardrum which may cause irreversible damage (deafness), as well as "huge bruises on my arms, back, ribs and legs as well as large bumps on my skull and cuts in my mouth".

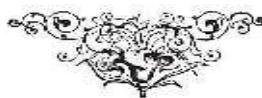
In the same letter he announced these injuries to the world, Damien also named his assailants (specifically, police officers Grenot, Remond, Cuzon and Lercorvaisier); the latter have now filed defamation charges, although the initial – harder to substantiate – charges of contempt and resistance have been dropped.

**Damien had only a month before been released from prison, after his arrest in December and sentenced for riot damages during the 'Ni Loi Ni Travail' rebellions (see Clarification on the Attack on the CGT Headquarters & on the Topic of 'Anonymous Disassociation'), namely for attacks against the Chamber of Commerce, a Jaguar showroom, a job centre and supermarket during a wild demo that took place on April 14th 2016 in Paris. Damien emphasised that during the combative**

wave that spring they had "fiercely fought against the BAC (riot police) and the protest marshals of the CGT (General Confederation of Labour trade union), who could no longer contain the revolt and joined forces to repress it with huge blows of truncheons and gas", while his only police interview statement was "I am neither guilty nor innocent. I am an anarchist. I have nothing more to say..."

During his sentence, like ones he has served before, he released a number of letters, for example claiming solidarity with other prisoners or comrades facing repression, and to contribute to an anarchist discussion on 'justice' scheduled in Paris. **We have included parts of one of these letters here, while he was held in Fleury-Merogis (Europe's largest prison) which we feel gives a context to the extreme enmity the French state holds the comrade in** (not that police violence is always so discriminating, of course, but their memories are long).

Finally, his imprisonment provoked many solidarity actions (not least the burning of another Jaguar in Paris for his birthday), one of the more innovative which we insert at the end; and the news of his recent beating followed in form. September 21st (also the second trial date of Kara and Krém over the action mentioned below in the footnotes), in Grenoble, 'some nocturnals' entered a vast police barracks; the fire they set devastated nearly 2,000m<sup>2</sup> of criminal investigation laboratory, offices, garages and 50 vehicles (including intervention vans and logistic trucks; one gendarmerie officer suffered smoke-inhalation trying in vain to battle the blaze), to the tune of around 20 million euros.



It's May 18th, the date of my parole, but I'm still in the slammer and I'm going to be staying here.

Sentence judge Catherine Ardaillon, left-wing trade unionist, activist at the Evry tribunal and at Fléury-Mérogis prison, has decreed that all the same, for cases like mine, it's lucky that there are prisons and therefore adjusting my sentence is out of the question.

[...] For several weeks now, I have been subjected to numerous searches, searches of my cell, searches of my body, etc. **They found nothing until an informant (who must have been very close to me, to give such precise information) told them where I was hiding my SIM cards.** So a few days ago they found 3 SIM cards hidden inside a packet of new rolling papers. They were hidden interspersed between the papers at the bottom of the packaging. During the search, the guard reacted in a way that betrayed that they had an informant: just

before the search, when I emptied my pockets before undressing, he immediately took my 2 packets of rolling papers aside, but he seemed disinterested by the rest. I knew I was done, and indeed, at the end of the search, he said to me: "And here, there is nothing?" Then he pulled out all the sheets one by one until the SIM cards appeared.

In the days that followed, some of the prisoners who I am close to have undergone similar searches.

Last night on May 17th, an ERIS intervention squad broke into my cell at around 8PM. For those unfamiliar with the ERIS, they are squads that receive the same training as the GIGN, GIPN and RAID, overtrained and equipped with various protections similar to those of the CRS [ed. – various special units] – bulletproof vests, plastic shields, hoods under their helmets so they cannot be recognized, reinforced gloves, shin guards, etc, etc. They are usually armed with batons and flashballs which they shoot at point black range, of course, since a cell is not bigger than 9m<sup>2</sup>.

In short they shocked us and threw us into the corridor, glued to the wall with our hands on our heads and then handcuffed. Myself and my co-detainee were then dragged into separate search rooms. For the rest, we know the story, thorough strip search, with the particularity this time that one of them forcibly lifted one of my legs to keep them apart as much as possible so that his colleague who was squatting could look at my anus better, with his Mag-lite so close to my ass that I could feel the heat produced by the bulb.

At the time it made me think of the Théo affair<sup>[1]</sup>, but I found nothing better than to say to him with a sly air: "Well my pig, you are doing a good job!"

[...] After the strip-tease, they threw us into the waiting room. They had blocked the windows with sheets of paper glued to the outside, but as one of them was slightly torn, I could see what was going on in the corridor.

There were a large number of people: matrons, ERIS, all the lieutenants, the director, plainclothes cops and the prosecutor.

They completely emptied the contents of the cell into boxes that were loaded into a truck to take them to the scanner. Then I saw them go into the cell with dogs. Later my cell neighbours told me that they even heard them dismantling parts of the cell with a screwdriver.

**Meanwhile, my cell mate, who is far from being a good strategist, was trying to break everything, banging everywhere and playing hide and seek by crouching right under the windows when they lifted the paper to see what was going on.** Well, of course, the director ordered the ERIS to forcibly remove him to solitary confinement.

In these cases, I prefer to make myself as discreet as possible in order to observe and listen to everything that happens and is said, the people present, etc.

I was left alone in the waiting room until 1:30AM. **The search took approximately 5.5 hours.**

When they took me out of the waiting room, they conducted a rather strange search: this time they searched in my mouth! The Maglite so they could see and then “*put your tongue to the left, top, right, bottom, spread your cheek with your finger*,” etc. For a moment I wondered if they were going to take me to the scanner itself, these idiots!

Then I understood: they were looking for a SIM card. The first three they already had, they had to analyze them and see whether there was anything interesting to find.

A few hours later, the lieutenant confirmed my suspicions: during the search they found 2 phones, a charger and a SIM. The lieutenant told me that everything had been sent off to be analyzed to determine who it belongs to.

He asked me some questions and I said I did not know who it belongs to. He did not insist, something that did not surprise me, because I knew that the result of the analysis would be for my part negative.

In reality, they did not succeed in finding anything concrete **[but that did not prevent them from rejecting my parole.]**

Perhaps the new Minister of Justice, the bastard of Bayrou, remembers the attack on the church in Pau, the town of which he is the mayor, made with a Molotov cocktail and claimed by the GADI (International Direct Action Group) in January 2014. An action and cell for which I claimed responsibility and participation following my arrest on charges of terrorism.

**Since I have not given any news for a long time, I will quickly recollect the sabotage of the prison workshops that I was accused of<sup>[2]</sup>.** As for the judicial procedure, which was not very interesting, I will simply say that they could not determine who was responsible. What is interesting is that the economic damage caused from inside the prison was not negligible. In fact, many Post-it customers would have been impacted in Norway, Sweden, Holland, Switzerland, Austria, France and England. It seems that the delivered merchandise was in some case not what had been ordered, and in the other cases was badly made and therefore unsellable.

**It is possible that following the debates surrounding the collage of anti-election posters that were pasted up in the courtyard, some prisoners wish to put into practice in the here-and-now the anarchist proposals that emerged from it.**

[...] I want to salute the Greek comrades and say that the Nemesis Project<sup>[3]</sup> is an exciting proposal.

A wink of solidarity to Kara and Krèm<sup>[4]</sup>! For a dangerous June<sup>[5]</sup>!

— *Damien*

1. ed. – 22-year-old black youth beaten and raped with a telescopic baton by four cops during a routine February 2017 stop-search in Paris, sparking riots.

2. ed. – Against a production line in one of the prison workshops (where via providers like Iccub, products of brands such as Hachette, Bourjois Parfums, Yves Rocher and Post-it, have merchandise packed by prisoners). Three other prisoners were also accused. In solidarity with them, tags appeared on the walls of the prison courtyard: ‘Fire To The Prisons’ and ‘a screw who commits suicide is partially forgiven’.

3. ed. – Modelled on the Phoenix Project (see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg45), so far this had comprised of a bombing at an Athenian judge’s home, bomb-threat at a Santiago military barracks, parcel-bomb to the German Minister of Finance, and fire-bomb in the Chilean National Association of Judiciary Officials.

4. ed. – Both still imprisoned when he was writing; they were among the 6 accused of burning a cop car (that initially still had the cops inside) during a police demonstration in Paris against the force frequently used against the during the *Loi Ni Travail* days; the cop union had also invited major figures of the neo-fascist National Front to the event for photo-ops. The sentences this October for five ranged from a fine to between 1 – 5 years in prison (some of those years suspended, hence their release), whereas the sixth (on the run) was sentenced to 7 years in absence for lighting the car with a flare.

5. ed. – see *Clarification on the Attack on the CGT Headquarters & on the Topic of ‘Anonymous Disassociation’*



## **Further Persecution of Ilya While Inside by Russian Authorities**

*[continued from *Return Fire* vol.3 pg86]*

Following his complaints, in April the comrade Ilya Romanov was awarded 3,400 euros by the European Court of Human Rights in compensation for ‘unreasonably long’ detention during the investigation. However all accounts of Ilya’s are blocked by the state, and when elderly relatives of his tried to transfer the money to Ilya they were detained by the police. In May he began a four-month stretch in solitary confinement, and in July, as revenge for his publicising the horrible conditions in Russian prisons, authorities seized his mobile phone and used his account in social media to spread a video clip calling for terrorist attacks. For this reason a new terrorism case has been opened against him.

“TERRORIST” IS THE STATE...

*Ilya Romanov appreciates mail: 431130, Mordovia, Zubovo-Poliansky district, st. Potma, n. Lepley.*

## **A Letter from Anarchist Comrade Anna Beniamino about Operation Scripta Manent & more... (Italy)**

The prosecution in Turin have decided to put an entire anarchist tendency on trial: anti-organisation Anarchism<sup>[1]</sup>. **This isn’t a sensationalist and defensive overstatement, it’s what Turin’s investigating judge, Anna Ricci, enacted** with the arrest warrants issued in July 2016, and enforced in September, probably to avoid disrupting the summer holidays of some public official.

The inquisitors’ choice is clear from the ridiculous framework that appeared in the arrest warrant papers, a product of the deleterious encounter between the mind of some cop and the rushed reading of a Wikipedia summary.

The framework gives shape to a repressive Manichean [ed. – i.e. dualistic] vision of a ‘social anarchy’, a good and harmless one,

### **LONG LIVE TUNGSTEN CARBIDE!**

*In solidarity with Damien. An occasion to share the remarkable effectiveness of a little pocket companion.*

I was very pissed off this evening. I was thinking of Damien facing trial, thinking of the great demo of 14th April, when we had fun smashing everything, of all those arseholes who are ruining our lives, of our diver’s masks and gas masks getting bored since we stopped smashing everything every Thursday [transl. – during the four months of protest against the *Loi Travail*, demos were often on Thursdays – sometimes also Tuesdays].

Near the Porte des Lilas [north-east of Paris], I smashed the screens of 7 ATMs, 4 JCDecaux billboards and the windows of a RATP [Paris public transport] car and one belonging to SPIE (prison building contractors).

All this with much appreciated discretion (relatively discreet: it makes a little ‘plop’, especially on car windows), thanks to a small [tungsten carbide] wheel used to cut tiles, 22mm in diameter, attached to a lace strong enough to take the weight of the shards of broken glass. To the cops [ed. – i.e. in a stop-and-search] it’s a funky necklace but it’s glass’s worst enemy. They can be found in all good DIY shops.

**Handyman Bob**

and an (anti-social and anti-classist) 'individual anarchy', violent and liable to repression, whose method is the 'anti-organization model'.

By making the necessary distinctions, this framework aims to define a specific camp, to create a cage, so that from a generic 'insurrectionism', (a sub-product of the anti-organization model), always violent and liable to punishment to varying degrees, sub-species can be pulled out to form different strands of the investigation<sup>[2]</sup> for Italian cops: 'classic insurrectionism', 'social insurrectionism', 'eco-insurrectionism' and the 'Informal Anarchist Federation' [hereafter, F.A.I.]

That different tensions and tendencies exist within Anarchism is a fact, but it's also true that this type of rigid categorisation is an inherent feature of the mindset and requirements of the inquisitors, who are set on delineating a specific area in order to make their manoeuvres as best they can: it is within this space that the following operation lies.

**Historically, solidarity with revolutionary prisoners has been a focal point of interest for anarchists and a way to come together and build a rebellious sensibility: revolutionary solidarity not solidarity with revolutionaries.**

Devised by Turin's DIGOS [*political police*] and prosecutors back in 2012, in the wake of 20 years of recurring and failed repressive attempts, operation Scripta Manent led to the arrest of 5 anarchists: A.M., V.S., D.C., M.B., A.B., all already under investigation and/or arrested following various anarchist publications on action and repression, specifically, Pagine in Rivolta<sup>[3]</sup>, the Croce Nera Anarchica bulletin<sup>[4]</sup>, KNO3<sup>[5]</sup>. In addition, there were the arrest warrants for A.C. and N.G.<sup>[6]</sup>, two comrades in prison since 2012 following an attack on the managing director of Ansaldo Nucleare, Adinolfi, which was claimed in court in October 2013 as the Olga Cell (FAI/FRI). For years, they'd been known as the editors of Pagine in Rivolta and Alfredo had already been prosecuted for KNO3.

Four other anarchists have been put under investigation, all of whom were imprisoned during the Ardire operation<sup>[7]</sup>, part of which converges into these current legal proceedings, along with 4 more whose arrests the judge refused to validate in the July warrant and led to the prosecutor's unsuccessful appeal attempt in October 2016. In addition, 32 raids were carried out across Italy, during which a comrade and editor of CNA was arrested and is still being held in prison under the AS2 [*high-security*] regime<sup>[8]</sup>.

*The investigation is still underway*

The operation is being led by prosecutor Roberto Sparagna, new to so-called anti-terrorism proceedings but well-known for having run trials for so-called organised crime. **It is unknown whether this operation was down to him or the input of Turin cops: the latter seems much more likely**, as the bulk of the investigation was conducted and archived by the DIGOS over the years and because of little picturesque background events like the "greetings from Dr. Petronzi" (Turin's ex-DIGOS chief), which Sparagna made sure to extend to the arrested during one of his interrogation attempts.

It matters little whether the prosecutor is essentially a puppet/ventriloquist or whether he's driven by his own will; the declared intent is to repress and silence an anarchist component that has always supported, and continues to support, direct action, solidarity with revolutionary prisoners, the multiform practices of anarchist destructive action and permanent rebellion against political conformism and compliance inside and outside the milieus of the movement.

Everyone is charged with article 270bis, some since 2003, others since 2008<sup>[9]</sup> relating to FAI/FRI to various degrees, as both 'promoters/organisers', as well as 'participants'.

A.C. and N.G. are also charged with article 280bis for a string of attacks<sup>[10]</sup> carried out from 2005 to 2007 on the basis of what is defined as a 'serious investigative framework' even if, in actual fact, the same comrades had already been investigated by the same cops, with the same 'evidence', both shortly after the same events and in 2012<sup>[11]</sup>, using the usual armoury of phone tapping, eavesdropping, video recording, tailing, DNA sampling, etc. and the cases had been archived.

Launched on the back of the 2012 arrests, this investigation is an attempt to apply an associative charge to the case of Adinolfi's wounding and to investigate a whole political area of comrades who expressed solidarity with those arrested and with their action: the cops used article 270bis and their so-called 'crimes of intent', in order to sift through what had already passed through the hands of various Italian prosecutors, putting everything together under their jurisdiction by reviving and rehashing a series of case files that had previously been archived.

**This attempt to bring everything together is also mentioned in the judicial order itself and had seeped into the media quite extensively in recent years**, as well as in August 2016, with newspaper articles that described 'anti-terrorism summits' held between the different prosecutors and made grand claims of 'bad masters' and 'violent

infiltrators' in contexts that in themselves, were democratically acceptable.

This time, having followed a temporal and logical format that inverts the classic action/repression sequence, repression is retroactively looking for unsolved actions and political positions consolidated over the course of 20 years, as a restraint and a warning against the current "excessive" shows of solidarity. **These are clearly aimed at repressing unwelcome solidarity and the spread of an anarchist feeling that openly talks about prisoners and actions, publishes and supports them.**



The cops' ambitions aimed even higher, as evident in the raids, failed arrests and most of all, in the accusatory framework that spans 20 years of anarchist actions and publications.

The excursus begins with the Marini trial<sup>[12]</sup> in 1996 and ends with the current Croce Nera Anarchica, tracing an optimal line that starts from critiques of how the Marini Trial was handled, passes through the various articles and claims presented in Pagine in Rivolta, KNO3 and CNA, and ends with writings containing discussions and calls to be present at the Adinolfi trial (WITH OUR HEADS HELD HIGH and HERE AND NOW) and finally, with today's CNA.

This is why it is not an overstatement to claim that this legal proceeding is one that is being **extended to an anarchist feeling**, even if it is trying to hone in on the circle: cornerstones of anti-authoritarian thought and method such as direct action and the rejection of representation, affinity and informality, revolutionary solidarity and mutual aid, become, in the words and paper rubbish of inquisitors, the dangerous raw material that must be repressed as soon as it appears.

It is neither simply a 'crime of opinion' that's being put on trial, nor the censorship of the democratic freedom of expression: this is the war that authority is waging against the bond between thought and action that lies at the basis of anarchism.

By trying to strike publications, blogs or any other means of communication anarchists decide to use, repression only reaffirms the validity of these means: to be

a thorn in the side of subjugation and silence.

### — Anna

Anna Beniamino, C.C. Rebibia Femminile, Bartolo Longo 92, 00156 Roma, Italy [correct as of 14/11/17]

#### 1. ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg80

2. Turin's prosecutors have produced several judicial proceedings based on this framework in the last two years, which resulted both in the attempts to put 3 eco-anarchists who had been previously sentenced in Switzerland for attempted sabotage of IBM [ed. – see *Good News At Last From Italy!* below], on trial yet again for article 270bis ['subversive association with the purposes of terrorism'] and to investigate and charge anarchists engaged in a solidarity fund for prisoners, with raids and warrants, using the same article 270bis.

3. *Pagine in Rivolta* was published under the subtitle 'revolutionary anarchist periodical' from 1997 to 2002, with 14 issues that had a variable circulation that reached one thousand copies. It had articles of analysis and critique of the anarchist movement, chronologies of direct actions, claims, prisoners' lists and news on repression.

4. The CNA [Anarchist Black Cross] bulletin targeted by repression is the one published from 2001 to 2005, and today's CNA published since 2014 with a blog and a journal. The editors of *Croce Nera Anarchica* of 2001/2005 were the targets of the 2005 'Operation Croce Nera', a 270bis operation, which led to the arrests of seven comrades that led to no avail, 3 of whom are among those investigated within *Scripta Manent*.

5. *KNO3* came out in 2008 as a single issue that was subtitled 'revolutionary anarchist paper'. In 2008 it was the object of a 270bis investigation, 'Operation Shadow', led by Perugia's prosecutor Emanuela Comodi, in collaboration with the ROS carabinieri forces, in which the associative crime was dropped during the first degree trial; in 2015 the appeal trial resulted in a sentence against A.C. and A.B., whilst a third comrade was put under investigation for article 302 with the aggravating circumstance of terrorism linked to articles published in *KNO3*; other comrades were sentenced for the sabotage of a railway track and for car theft.

#### 6. ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg78

7. 'Operation Ardire' began in Perugia with prosecutor Comodi, in collaboration with ROS carabinieri forces and led to seven arrests in June 2012. It was based on article 270bis and referred to a series of attacks claimed by FAI/FRI between 2009 and 2012. The jurisdiction of the case passed from Perugia to Milan after a high court ruling in the appeal court, and for some of the accused, S.F., E.D.B., G.P.S. and G.L.T. [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg75], it was passed from Milan to Turin and brought into *Scripta Manent*. All those imprisoned were released in 2013 after serving the maximum [pre-trial] term.

8. D.C. was arrested during one of the raids within *Scripta Manent* after electric material for common use (9-volt batteries and bulbs) was found in his home. Prosecutor Francesca Polino

from Rome opened a separated proceeding against him, whilst keeping him in the high security AS2 regime.

9. From 2003, because this is the year identified as the beginning of FAI following the attack on the interior minister at the time, Prodi and because of the text that claimed responsibility for it. For some of the accused, it's 2008, because they'd already been put under investigation for the same attack, without having been formally charged.

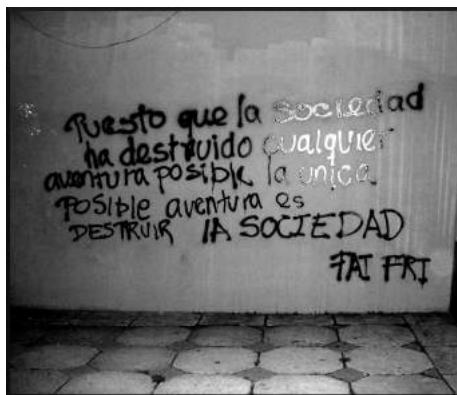
10. This refers to: the explosive device against the RIS carabinieri forces in Parma in October 2005, an action claimed by Coop. Artigiana Fuoco e Affini (occasionally spectacular)/FAI; the explosive/incendiary parcel sent to the then mayor of Bologna Sergio Cofferati in November 2005, also claimed by Coop. Artigiana Fuoco e Affini/FAI; the double explosive attack on the carabinieri training centre in Fossano (CN) in June 2006 claimed by FAI/RAT [Tremendous Anonymous Revolt]; the explosive/incendiary parcels sent to the then-mayor of Turin, Chiamparino, the director of Torino Cronaca, Beppe Fossati, and placed on the premises of Coema Edilizia, a company involved in the construction of the CIE migrant detention centre in Turin in July 2006, all claimed by RAT/FAI; the 3 explosive devices set off in sequence in the Turin neighbourhood of Crocetta in March 2007 and claimed by RAT/FAI.

11. In the summer of 2012, during the investigation and subsequent arrest of A.C. and N.G., prosecutors in various Italian jurisdictions reopened a series of archived case files relating to the attacks that the FAI had claimed over the previous 10 years.

12. In 1995, about thirty anarchists were arrested and put on trial by Rome's prosecutor Antonio Marini in collaboration with ROS carabinieri forces for article 270bis, in addition to a series of specific offenses. The associative charge referring to the so-called ORAI organisation was dropped in 2004 and a sentence for subversive propaganda and other specific offenses were confirmed.



This letter from Anna Beniamino, published in the third bulletin of the current CNA, was translated into English in April. Operation *Scripta Manent* was launched September



"When a society has destroyed all possible adventure, the only possible adventure is TO DESTROY THAT SOCIETY"

"Repression is the bulldozer of a capitalism that is destroying the world, of a civilization that isolates men and women in order to later socialize them into its virtual community. [...] There is no doubt that a strong repressive wind is rising. I think that the decisive stake in play is that of being able to interpret this repression.

Current living and working conditions can be imposed through an increasingly massive use of terror (terror of remaining unemployed and of not being able to pay quickly rising rents, terror of the police and of prison). Repression acts against atomized individuals whose increasing dependence on a bankrupt way of life is rendering them incapable of any material

or ideal solidarity. It is a mistake to separate the repressive attacks from this progressive disintegration of the world –

in the sense of a direct experience of reality and of one's fellow human beings, outside of the media and mercantile bell-jar, outside of the tomb-like apartments of the concentration imposed by urban planning. Knowing how to interpret repression also means not falling into the illusion that those in power strike us because we are a real threat (with all the locking up of identity that such an illusion entails). If we are a detonator, as someone has said, the aim of those in power is to separate us from any explosive material, i.e., from any social context of struggle.

In word and action, we should do the exact opposite." – *A Friend of Ludd*

6th 2016 with raids on the homes of 34 comrades with pistols drawn (while Nicola and Alfredo were notified in prison of the additional charges), with at first 15 people charged of various of the actions named above, all for "subversive association with terrorist aims" and seven of those locked up awaiting trial. All of those jailed were instantly put in solitary confinement, subject to constant harassment, and denied contact with each other or outside.

Nevertheless, the comrades began a series of spirited rebellions against their jailers, variously undertaking hunger-strikes against their isolating conditions, refusing to comply with medical tests or fingerprinting and photo procedure, and breaking the windows of a screw's office on one of the high-security wings many of them are held (and then the panels over the air vents in his individual cell that prevent view of the outside).

June 2nd, Italian political police notified seven more comrades of their charges in a parallel investigation focusing on the anarchist websites RadioAzione, Anarhija and Croce Nera Anarchica (in the last case

also its hard-copy version, its distributors and those who organised the presentations of the same journal in Italy) under 270bis and also '(terrorist) criminal association', while two of those comrades were also charged with 'attack with the purposes of terrorism'. One of the comrades summarized the content of the accusations like this: *"Translation of texts, predisposition, solicitation, defending of criminal acts, conception and dissemination through the web-sites and journals of ideological "insurrectionist-armed struggle" propaganda, money raising to support the imprisoned comrades, and the attack against a substation of ENEL [manufacturer and distributor of electricity and gas] in Cittavecchia, January 12th, 2016, signed by "Pyrotechnical Committee for an Extraordinary Year/F.A.I.-F.R.I."* (In some reports on the repression, the bombing in Cittavecchia is cited as being against the courthouse (for which a claim exists from the same F.A.I. group); we're not sure where the confusion comes from.) It also emerged that Gioacchino Somma, of RadioAzione, has been surveilled for six years with a key-logger installed on their computer, wiretapping, and physical tailing (even for a journey of 600 kilometers).

According to the comrade, *"on January 10th the Public Prosecutor's Office of Naples demanded an arrest for me, the comrade of [RadioAzione's Croatia version] and two other Greek comrades (one of which is already imprisoned for C.C.F. membership [ed. – see 'Yet Another Fenced World' below]). From that moment on, everything has been taken over by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Turin and the prosecutor Sparagna [in charge of Operation Scripta Manent], since the Office of Naples did not have jurisdiction over the crimes we are charged for.*

*What are we accused of?*

*Of providing counter-information through web-sites and magazines, translation of claims of responsibility from across the world, of support, solidarity and complicity with the anarchist comrades Alfredo [Cospito] and Nicola [Gai], raising money for imprisoned comrades. Of creating an Italian-Croatian-Greek F.A.I. cell.*

*In some parts of the documents, the prosecutor on duty tries to foment the rifts which exist between some of us and the rest of the anarchist movement, and furthermore he invents out of thin air, through wiretapping transcribed in his own way, a disagreement between me and the comrades of CNA [Croce Nera Anarchica], while there has been a full cooperation since the beginning, and I believe that it is the only anarchist journal in Italy worthy of reading, so much so that I am accused of organizing the presentation of this project in Naples."* (In June it was decided that the

comrade who runs the Croatian RadioAzione will be tried separately, even though she faces the very same charges.)

It seems obvious that what we are facing is a concerted attempt to criminalise solidarity itself, and to wear down specific anarchists who practice it through methodical and repeated targeting of those who raise their voice (or not only) in complicity with the accused. **Anti-terrorism being an international political project, police departments across Europe and the world definitely comparing notes and strategies for the neutralisation of radical forces (and the cowing of the population at large)**, it can't help but remind us of the strategy deployed in the Spanish State these last few years too (see **Return Fire vol.3 pg82**), but with anything a heavier focus on factionalising the Italian anarchist movement and confining it to ideological enclosures backed up by walls erected by the distribution of policing. **The comrades targeted in this operation, by the prosecutor's own theory, are those least 'integrated' with the broader anarchist movement in Italy;** often slightly older, some being parents, and/or holding positions the difference of which from others held by other anarchists have been at the root of disagreements over the previous years. While we reject 'unity' and the erasure of (in our eyes quite important) differences within the anarchist space, let's understand and expose (not to mention strategise against) the state's tactics.

Comparison could also be made to the 'Green Scare' case in the U.S.A. (see **Return Fire vol.4 pg78**); sometimes the state seems to wait until years after actions have happened, assuming that the people they are going to target will be in less 'integrated' positions within the milieu and easier to isolate. This gives credence to the analysis that has been emerging in recent years among anarchists of repression primarily as a means of enclosure [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg69**]; the task is ours to combat it.

Although not part of the Scripta Manent case, it's worth mentioning in this context that two other comrades were sentenced on separate occasions for publicising their support for the action Alfredo and Nicola were initially locked up for; in the case of one, because he had responded to a denunciation from within the anarchist scene itself of the attack, which cost him a 14 month sentence for incitement (initially with aggravating circumstance of promoting terrorism added due to a new law created to prosecute people based on blog entries, though it didn't stick in court).

A summary was offered by the anti-prison group Cassa AntiRepressione Alpi Occidentali: *"[Scripta Manent] is essentially based on a comparison*

*between the claims of various attacks and pieces of writing by the comrades on trial, on the contacts between the latter and on the distinction between the good, the bad, the social, the radical, FAI members and so on, in the anarchist galaxy. One of the classic analyses devised in courtrooms and police stations. [...] To this it adds the 'necessity' to identify leaders (still according to a script and an investigation) i.e. the founders of the subversive association: precisely for this reason Anna Beniamino, Nicola Gai, Alfredo Cospito and Danilo Cremonese won't be able to be present at the proceedings in the courtroom, as they will be subjected to video conferencing.*

*For a defendant video conferencing actually means the impossibility to be present in the courtroom alongside comrades, friends, families; the difficulty to determine his/her own intervention at the trial (for example any defendant's statement can be immediately interrupted with a simple click); to communicate face-to-face with his/her co-defendants; to 'get out' of the prison walls.*

*The operation Scripta Manent is a direct attack on anarchists, on anyone who struggles without mediation or compromise.* So, with the trial just having begun this November 16th, the accused Marco Bisesti, Valentina Speziale and Alessandro Mercogliano refused to participate in the trial in solidarity with the comrades subjected to video conferencing from the high surveillance units AS2 where they are locked up. November 19th, Claudia and Stefano declared the same: *"The fact that our comrades are being denied the right to physically attend the courtroom, that the principle of participation in the defence, which the law that supports the democratic lie guarantees, is thus cancelled, is yet another demonstration of how partisan the use of legality is. Especially for this reason, we will no longer take part in this farce, deserting the hearings and entrusting technical defence to lawyers aiming to bring out as far as possible the contradictions that support this system, without justifying our being and without claiming any crumbs of democracy."* Gioacchino Somma absented himself; *"I have never gone to the courtrooms where my funeral was being prepared in the past and I will not do so now!"*

In his statement to the court, Alfredo claimed affinity with the actions of the FAI for which they are being accused, while denouncing the targeting of *"a significant part of all those who have shown solidarity in these years, among them my dearest friends"*, but said that unlike for the action in Genoa (responsibility for which he had spat in the faces of the judges at that trial)

he couldn't take credit for the other actions. For our part, thinking of the isolated comrades in these heavy days, we have included an article written by an Italian anarchist while jailed in a separate case on the subject of video-conferencing in the context of trials (as was the case in his own). **Repression strikes again, the war continues, but in whatever form we brace against the tide and try to elude the police enclosure, find the rhythm appropriate to our moment (be that memory, attack, care, propaganda, whatever best serves), knowing that our**

**multi-formed practices are too expansive to fit in their fucking legal codes or ideological divisions.**

For this reason we welcome the diversity of responses to the case (maybe even more so than certain of the accused do!); the Tattoo Circus benefit event in Genoa as much as the solidarity attacks across the world (from vandalism of prison staff's cars and home in Bristol to the arson a 4x4 of the Presidency of the Argentine Nation in Buenos Aires). In these days, making a public stand to defy the narrative of "anarchist terrorists" (despite the risks clearly being so great)

is in itself an act of sabotage against the state apparatus and media machine, and the more diverse opportunities there are for people to participate in crossing that threshold (whatever their dispositions), the better. We'll leave it there with the words of those who burned out a couple of mobile phone antennas one week after the first Scripta Manent arrest, the first in a long wave of arsons on Italian masts, radio base stations and other infrastructure in the context of the case; "May our daily life, with or without repression, be (also) destructive! May solidarity, even more when repression strikes, be (also) attack!"

The trial continues.

## THE PRISON OF GAZES

*- notes on trial by video-link*

### Convicts' Chains & the Public Gaze

Up until 1836 it was still normal in France to make convicts walk to the prison in chains. The future prisoners wore iron collars and were chained together and forced to walk along the public road dragging proof of their conviction and showing crowds of people the consequences for anyone who broke the law.

The path to reclusion, the last journey before disappearing behind the secret obscurity of prison took place in full view, in a public ceremony with a strong visual impact that could unleash all kinds of feelings. The departure of these human chains attracted masses of people, exhibited the convict to the crowd, exposed them to insult and spitting, but also to feelings, compassion and complicity; in a complex ritual whose outcome was not predictable, the march exposed the convict to the public gaze and showed his *[sic]* gaze to the public.

*'The chain brought its celebration with it to all the cities it passed through'.* The convicts bore not only iron collars and chains, the obligatory signs of punishment, but also ribbons of straw, garlands of flowers and colourful pieces of rag which they themselves had sewn on to weird headgear and berets flaunted for the occasion. **A colourful and irreverent touch of joyous madness, of harlequin mockery dressed in rags, could turn this dismal march into an 'itinerant fair of crime', a sort of nomadic tribe of convicts that mocked the chains with which they were restrained, cursed the judges and invoked torment on them.**

And then the songs, convicts' songs. Marching songs sung together that deeply impressed the people and became famous and passed on from mouth to mouth. Songs that often *'excited pride in the face of punishment'* rather than moaning remorse for the crime committed. All this contributed to spoiling a celebration of justice set up by power as a ritual of guilt and repentance, making it socially dangerous as it was capable of overturning the symbols of power, changing the order of its discourse, overpowering its moral code.

To quote the *Gazette des tribunaux* of 19th July 1836: *'It is not our custom to lead men away this way; it is necessary to avoid such a horrible spectacle in the towns that the convoy passes through, it being in any case of no education to the population.'* Not long afterwards the transport of convicts to prison ceased to take place in public rituals. A technical change intervened to clear public roads of such a contradictory spectacle: the prison cart.

### The Prison Cart & the Panoptic Gaze

Michel Foucault, who studied the origin of prison and its accessory devices carefully, writes that *'imprisoning, which ensures privation, has always involved a technical project'* and that *'the replacement in 1837 of the chain gang with the prison cart'* is *'a symptom and summary'* of a technical mutation, a *'shift from one art of punishing to another'*.

The prison cart is not to be meant simply as a closed cart used to transport convicts who were previously subjected to the additional punishment of being chained in public; rather, it should be seen as a technical innovation that marks a change of paradigm. This vehicle was conceived as a prison on wheels lined with tin. Impenetrable to the outside eye, it parades sadly through the streets without revealing anything of what it contains.

The wretches riding in it, be they already convicted or awaiting trial, all travel in chains; but now they are in small single cells, which prevent them not only from looking out but also from meeting the gaze of the other 'passengers'. Instead, a central corridor allows the guards to keep an eye on all those being transported through a peephole.

Thus *Gazette des tribunaux* describes this mechanism of internal control: *'The opening and slanting position of the peepholes are made in a way that the guards can keep their eyes on the prisoners constantly, hearing the slightest sound, without the prisoners being able to see or hear one another.'*

Not simply a closed wagon, therefore, but a technical device developed with precise aims: hide the convict from the public eye, prevent him *[sic]* from seeing the outside world and improve the techniques of surveillance. Not just a mobile tin box, but a 'panoptical cart' [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg9], a prison of gazes that wipes out the mocking splendor of the chains of the convicts, making them blind, silent, invisible and controllable.

The secret obscurity of prison extends and anticipates his arrival; its shadow falls upon the convict keeping him out of sight even before he sets foot in jail. Bourgeois reformist modesty transports without showing how it punishes, without making a spectacle any longer. No more exchanging gazes between the people and the criminal, the only permitted gaze is that of the guard at the penitent prisoner.

### The Video-Conference & the Disembodied Gaze

Let's get back to Italy now. The last frontier in the field of 'transport for judicial reasons' is the trial held by video-link, where the transport takes place in an immaterial form.

The defendant on trial, if already in prison for previous convictions or on remand, can be judged at a distance without having to leave the prison. He *[sic]* is taken to a specific room inside the prison and follows the proceedings on a screen under the watchful eye of the guards and the technological gaze of a camera focused on him, transmitting his image to the courtroom where the trial is taking place.

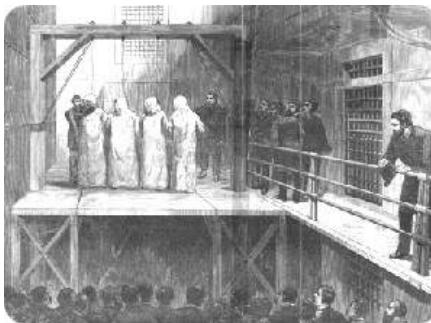
**Like the shift from 'chains' to 'prison cart', the introduction of the video-conference marks a shift that sums up a change in paradigm. In fact, video-linking is a technological device and as such it is not neutral, on the contrary its mediation involves profound changes that sink deep into the living flesh of those who have defied the law.**

In *Les Misérables*, Victor Hugo describes the punitive device par excellence, the scaffold: ‘*The scaffold is an image. It is not merely a framework, a machine, a lifeless mechanism of wood, iron, and rope. It is as though it were a being having its own dark purpose, as though the framework saw, the machine listened, the mechanism understood; as though that arrangement of wood and iron and rope expressed a will. In the hideous picture which its presence evokes it seems to be most terribly a part of what it does. It is the executioner’s accomplice; it consumes, devouring flesh and drinking blood. It is a kind of monster created by the judge and the craftsman; a spectre seeming to live an awful life born of the death it deals.*’

Unlike the scaffold, video-linking is not a device that enforces a sentence already imposed, let alone death, which is no longer contemplated by the penal code; but even more than the scaffold, articulated as it is with a microphone and cameras, it is a ‘structure’ that ‘sees’, a ‘machine’ that ‘hears’. Certainly it doesn’t ‘eat flesh’, but in its own way it ‘disembodies’ the accused, dematerializes his *[sic]* body, reduces him to a bunch of bits producing a sensorial and visual impact within a process that should not be underestimated: through it the presence of the defendant, however distant, becomes spectral, his body is treated like a video interference to whom words can be allowed or taken away by a simple ‘click’.

**It’s the triumph of reformist scruples that in the past cleared the streets of the human chains of convicts which now, through the new technologies, ‘frees’ the courtrooms from an annoying and strident presence so that the abstraction of the law can go forward undisturbed.** It also denies the embrace between co-defendants, who can’t see each other even on that occasion. No emotional contact with the public either, who don’t even appear on the screen. No complicit gazes, no greetings to family and friends. Once you enter prison, even before trial, you don’t get out again, even to attend trial. Entombed, buried in concrete. The very jury is made to see you as being so dangerous that you can’t be taken before them. Somehow your guilt is implicitly designated by the way you ‘appear’.

In all this, the accused is reduced to a passive spectator. He *[sic]* observes his trial on a screen as if it was an episode of *Forum* or *Quarto grado*. His only right, in good TV tradition, is to be allowed to call his lawyer during proceedings. And yet it is his life that is at stake. It is his body that will be possibly destined to imprisonment. It is his, the amputated view of the horizon. It is he who is deprived of the embrace of his loved ones. His sense of smell deprived of spring. Finally, it’s his gaze, dejected or proud, that faces ‘punishment’ – preventive or definitive – day after day. Video-linking is the technological ally that perfects the imprisonment of gazes. Cowardly, it multiplies the eyes peering at he *[sic]* who went beyond the boundaries of the law, but it no longer dares to look him in the eye. A cybernetic metaphor of blindfolded justice equipped with artificial eyes, but which remains blind all the same.



### Some Provisional Conclusions

Introduced in Italy for prisoners under the 41bis regime<sup>[1]</sup>, video-conference in trials is now rapidly being extended to all prisoners whom justice considers ‘worthy’ of special attention. It is the case of Maurizio Alfieri, a rebel bank robber not inclined to prison domestication; it is the case of Gianluca and Adriano, anarchists accused of having carried out various actions against ENI, some tycoons of the rubbish business and other poison-producing giants *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg71]*; it could be, actually it is already in the desire of the Turin prosecutors, the case of Claudio, Chiara, Niccolò and the present writer<sup>[2]</sup>, accused of having committed an act of sabotage on the High Speed site in Chiomonte.

A special exemption for the ‘right of defence’, which foresees the physical presence of the defendant alongside his *[sic]* lawyer during trial, justified with the usual pretext of ‘security’ and ‘public order’. A new danger, that of video-linking destined to take root and spread rapidly, if it is not uprooted immediately; as, we know, it is today’s exception that becomes tomorrow’s rule. The paradigm lying under this new ‘technical mutation’ is complex, and it’s difficult to assess and unveil all its facets at this very moment.

**Definitely the kind of trial procedure that is emerging shows a gradual disappearance of the accused, a growing conditioning of the jury in advance and the overwhelming inquisitorial power of the prosecutors.** What I have tried to do here is to highlight some of the repercussions of this technical mutation, and to focus on the topic of the ‘gaze’, i.e. the visual exchange between the prisoner’s gaze, the judicial gaze and the public gaze. Many other considerations could be made, just as important or even more so. For example, on how video-linking prevents the defence lawyer from discussing with his *[sic]* client during the trial; or the fact that in the spectacularisation of trials special effects and optical illusions are likely to be more determining than the facts under examination. But my faith in the law is so little that I won’t dwell on certain details. I’d rather conclude these random notes on video-linking by quoting the lyrics of some old prison songs, those sung in the streets by the chain gangs. Heart-to-heart words that speak for themselves.

*‘Greedy for unhappiness, your gaze is seeking an infamous breed among us that whines and mortifies itself. But our gaze is proud. Goodbye, because we don’t give a damn about your chains or your laws.’*

1. *ed.* – Severe isolation conditions, suspended only when a prisoner co-operates with the authorities, when a court annuls it, or when the prisoner dies; introduced in 1975 as an emergency measure to deal with prison revolts during the ‘Years of Lead’ (see *Memory as a Weapon; The Origins of Victimization*) and never removed by any other democratic regime...

2. *ed.* – This text was written by Mattia Zanotti, from the High Security Unit of the prison of Alessandria, Italy. He was then awaiting trial on charges relating to the struggle against the Lyon-Turin international T.A.V. (‘Treno Alta Velocità’, high-speed trainline) construction; for which, the longest tunnel in Europe would have to be dug through the Alps mountains (releasing toxicity from the harmless-when-undisturbed uranium and asbestos they contain, fouling ground-water, and expanding the reach and connectivity of trans-national industrial capitalism). Specifically, in the Susa Valley of northern Italy (where the decades-long battle against the project is fiercest), around 30 people in Maddalena had raided a construction site for the works and torched a significant amount of machinery and equipment despite worker and police presence; just a few days after the site had been cleared (with violent clashes) following an occupation of over a month by opponents of the T.A.V. project. Mattia and six others were charged with participating in the attack, which prosecutors attempted to upgrade to a terrorist offense due to the importance of the infrastructural project of the T.A.V. to both Italy and the European Union. Sabotage and rioting has been a part of the arsenal of (some of) the opponents of the T.A.V. during the over-20 years it has been resisted (see *Return Fire vol.2 pg58/64/65*); Italian paratroopers fresh from foreign battlefields have been among the troops the State has dispatched to occupy the area and quell disorder, and the prosecutors for Mattia’s case alone spoke of over a hundred attacks against the project in the area just in the two years leading up to the site raid. On trial, Mattia and his three comrade co-defendants proudly claimed their part in the raid. These are some of his words during the trial: “I knew Maddalena and the Clarea Valley before the TAV yard was erected there. In those woods I walked, slept, ate, sang, danced. In those places I experienced precious fragments of life together with friends who are no longer there and whom I carry in my heart. To those places I went back many times in the course of the years. In the daylight, in the night, in mornings and evenings; in summer, winter, autumn and spring. I’ve seen those places changing and trees falling down after being cut down to make room for barbed wire. I’ve seen the yard expanding and a piece of woodland disappearing, headlights popping up and the army coming over to watch a desolate landscape from the same armoured vehicles that patrol the mountains in Afghanistan. So I went back again to the Clarea valley during the now-famous night of May.” He is currently serving a sentence of 3 years and 6 months on house-arrest.

**Collaborazionisti, ditte, sbirri, politici e giudici  
potenziare la lotta è la nostra  
risposta. Sabotare il vostro  
esistente la nostra scelta.**



The poster reads; “Collaborators, companies, cops, politicians & judges: We step up the fight and our response. Our choice is sabotage of the existent.”

# Concerning the juridical situation of our comrade Marcelo Villaroel Sepulveda... or, how the state's revenge perpetuates itself in silence (Chile)

[continued from *Return Fire* vol.1 pg72]

Last September, at the 4th Military Prosecutor's Office in Santiago, the refusal of the petition to prescribe the sentences made by our comrade Marcelo several months ago was announced.

Immediately, Marcelo appealed this refusal, leaving the resolution of the appeal in the hands of the Martial Court, where it was reaffirmed in the first days of October.

**These condemnations correspond to some causes originated by actions framed in his old militancy at the "MAPU-Lautaro", organization in which our comrade was an active fighter since a very young age and of which, while imprisoned, in 1995, he was expelled because of "anarchist deviations".**

Marcelo served his sentence without interruption for 11 years, two months and fifteen days from October 13, 1992 until December 28, 2003, remaining only his night prison until March 2005, when he granted the so-called "probation", which obliges him to sign a document [*at the police station*] every week until completing 20 years of penitentiary control.

The first days of November 2007 for Marcelo are marked for him by his participation on the Bank Security robbery, along with other other comrades, action in which a cop died and that caused an answer from the State without precedents. Marcelo decides to assume clandestinity, and in February 2008, in his absence, he has his "probation" revoked.

In March 2008, he is detained in Argentina and in September 2014, he is sentenced to 14 years for 2 bank robberies.

In that same period, as penalties related to old causes emanated from the always sinister "Military Justice" were revised, the condemnation remained as it follows:

- *Ilicit terrorist association: 10 years and a day.*
- *Damage to a cop car with serious injuries to carabineros: 3 years + 541 days.*
- *Co-author of murder qualified as terrorist: 15 years and a day.*
- *Theft with intimidation, Law 18.314: 10 years and a day.*
- *Explosive attack against the embassy of Spain: 8 years.*

**In total, these old convictions add up to 46 years**, establishing its end on February, 2056.

There are a number of irregularities in this math, and although the legal issue is not our focus and never was, we believe that it becomes urgent and necessary to face this situation that represents a clear revenge against a comrade who holds high subversive autonomous and libertarian convictions, a comrade who has never abandoned the direct confrontation for total liberation, nor has it ever renounced its combatant history — leaving it as a commodity for books or prizes of borrowed stories, where hundreds of renegades hide while roaming around different pseudo-radical spaces.

Our call is to get rid of the verbiage and the false gestures of solidarity to face this and each of the revenge that come from the State (as a constant policy against all those who do not deny their ties and convictions).

It's time to act, to realize that no comrade in prison is alone.

**FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL PRISONS!!!**

**WHEN MISERY EXISTS, THERE WILL BE REBELLION!!!**

**People near Marcelo**  
Santiago-Valparaíso (Chile)  
October, 2017

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## "Yet Another Fenced World" – Olga Oikonomidou speaks [+ updates] (Greece)

On March 19th [2011] a jeep of EKAM [Greek police anti-terrorist unit] along with 3 cop cars stop in front of a huge rolling iron door. A guard asks for the papers. Everything checks out... and the door opens. As it shuts behind us, yet another fenced world appears before me. It is the prison of Eleonas at Thebes. I get out of the jeep escorted by two women of the anti-terrorism squad that, for the last four days, had been successfully playing the role of my nanny. It took a few minutes of waiting until



they delivered me to my new life-guardians. In those few minutes, I kept hearing

remarks from them, like *"it's nice in here.... such a well-preserved building."* I found it only proper to leave them with the phrase *"if you like it so much, why don't you come and stay here?"*. Naturally, merely the thought of staying in any prison institution is scary to a visitor, scary enough to make any person – even a subhuman – shut their mouth and simply leave.

**The women's prison of Thebes is a newly built progressive monstrosity with oblong branching corridors, cameras covering every angle with no blind spots, with male and female guards, automatic doors with iron bars every 10 meters, empty concrete courtyards smaller than a basketball court, surrounded by walls that end in barbed wire.** Outside these walls there are security areas up until the external wall that separates you from freedom. There are guards in small raised kiosques that supervise the place almost 24/7, in case someone finds a hole to escape.

A small fenced zoo is located between the outer door and the main entrance of the prison. There is neither access to nor visual contact with anyone but visitors, prisoners cleaning, and while on your way to the warden's office. **They figured the scenery looks more natural with imprisoned animals next to imprisoned people. After all, democracy usually "decorates" its little monsters.** After three weeks of adjustment, I am now permanently<sup>[1]</sup> on C wing, at a ward with a 14 people capacity. I would say that the forced cohabitation with 12 other women is not the simplest of things. With zero personal space and all sorts of vagaries, anyone could easily go beyond their limits. Apart from 2.5 hours per day that I'm allowed to go out in the yard, the rest are confined to a 20x30m room. This is the space allowed for one to move. In this room I drink coffee, I eat, read, write, listen to music, think. This is the place I've spent my life for the last 2.5 months and will continue to do so, indefinitely more. The walls are painted up to the ceiling with images of meadows, trees, seas and fish.

They tried to give prison a more humane face. To make prisoners believe that lack of natural landscape could possibly be replaced with paint. During the first days of stay, it seemed to me like a bad joke, now it has become irritating.

The staff act in a similar, contradictory manner. Typical prison guards trying to pretend that the kind of work they do could be somehow exonerated. They think that politeness could compensate for the standard evening and morning count, for the insensitivity and indifference they

demonstrate when inmates very frequently self-mutilate in fits, or at addicts' outbursts. It is them who are handing out psychiatric drugs generously to avoid troubles, while depon (paracetamol) seems to be the drug for any other illness. It is them, who – depending on the command – will not hesitate one bit to lead you to isolation, who will conduct a humiliating strip search, who have the audacity to get a 'free peek' at your letters. It is them who will lock the door on their way out when it reaches 9pm, as easily as they wish you goodnight. Hypocrisy at its best. **In here, wishing does not seem appropriate. There is no good night or good day in prison. There is only day and night.**

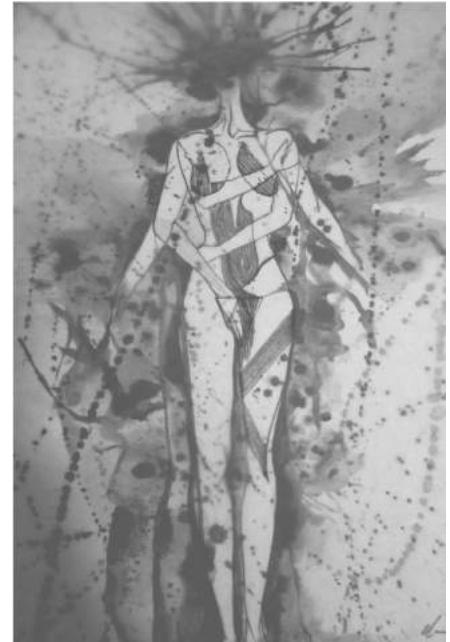
The logic of sovereignty dictates a certain segregation of people according to seemingly fragmentary features. Thus, it creates ostensible communities resulting in the reinforcement of inequality and competition. The morality of society responds to this calling not just by reciprocating this logic, but most of the times by becoming its biggest supporter. Social class, ethnicity, gender are just some of the examples that shape perceptions and attitudes daily. **Prison is a crucial part of the system and the inmate community is a compact, small-scale representation of society.** So it's only natural that the symptoms of the sick world we live in, are transferred behind the walls as well. On one hand, prison somehow collectivises the inmates forcing them to identify themselves within a common identity negatively marked by their penalty. At the same time, segregation appears in all its magnitude when men and women are chucked into different hellholes. Men and women will be proportionally segregated once more in protection wards, drug addict wards, gypsy wards, under-aged wards, mothers wards, insubordinate wards, white *[isolation]* prison cells. **Each one of these categories requires different treatment depending on the actual interests of the system.** The submissive worms (snitches) and former clappers of the system (corrupt cops thrown away by the system itself) will be protected, the mothers will be used to show pretexual humanism, the addicts will receive degradation and indifference. There are decent female prisoners experiencing some of these conditions, such as the treatment of being an addict, who could surely be far more detailed and descriptive about their experiences.

As an anarchist revolutionary, I believe that gender segregation is an issue with much social implication, both inside and outside the walls. It is both an underestimated, and distortedly overestimated issue at times. I find that for ages, there's been a well-rooted perception amongst people as to which attributes and behaviours are suited

for men or women only. The roles and social identities one is attributed at birth and carries from then on, are gender based. **This is the deepest segregation society has ever abided by.** Social norms define women as the weaker sex, and the social implications in every day life are vast. Continuous reproduction of such a notion automatically defines a subject as inferior, presents it as a victim and it ends up being treated as protected species. But as in any relationship, there is he who transmits and he who receives/accepts. The female gender in its vast majority accepts its social identity and is lead to the logic of victimisation, either to renounce responsibilities, or to rest on its laurels, justifying its inertia, since "demands" are automatically brought down. A victimised perception of any issue, leads to defeatism and non-utilisation of one's ability and capability. The power and responsibility of an individual on both a personal and collective level, is what promotes liberating moments, conditions, or actions. Speaking for myself, I have never thought of myself as the weaker sex, and I never wanted to be passive. I released myself from the guilt syndrome society imposes on you, and I've always walked my way according to my personal values and will. **On my path, I've come across stares that were still trapped deep inside gender stereotypes, many times. In my opinion, even within the anarchist milieu there is great prejudice lurking on behalf of men, and complacency or even gender role exploitation on behalf of women. In my eyes, I can't think of a rebel who will not fight for the abolition of social roles.**

Primarily for oneself on a personal level, and secondarily for others, at a global level. It is both a process of introspection, as well as basic denial of the ways of this world. Since nothing in this life is granted to you, you have to earn it yourself. The bottom line is, how well can a woman overcome the residue imposed on her by society, and act freely and no longer be confined in it. It's only then that the roles are broken, and finally abolished through active attitude.

I chose to be active in a world of passiveness. I chose active participation in a revolutionary organisation. I did not follow anybody and I was not carried away by anything. *I chose.* I was present at the conversations, decisions, actions, as I am now present to pay the price. I claimed responsibility for my actions while I could of taken advantage of my gender status to get a more favourable treatment. But how decent would that be? **Throughout history, a woman involved in revolutionary ventures, practically breaks two roles. On one hand, she consciously abolishes her identity as a law-abiding citizen questioning law and order, while on the other, her identity as**



**a woman, overcoming the standardised perception of gender roles (mother, wife, chick) that society itself has imposed on her.**

During the '70s when the revolutionary organization RAF *[ed. – Red Army Faction, authoritarian Marxist-Leninists]* was active and had a number of women participating in it, German authorities [operating against subversives] would command to "shoot the women first". The very fact of essentially overcoming two roles, made women more determined, more conscious, thus more dangerous in comparison to men, and their gender-based compatibility to delinquency (always according to the state-official-scientific approach), who were pursuing a more natural path.

Every era though, has its own characteristics and conditions. **The anti-authoritarian movement often searches within the outlaw milieu for a revolutionary subject, assuming that questioning the law through one or more illegal acts also involves the questioning of the extant system.**

*Mutatis mutandis*<sup>[2]</sup>, it also assumes that a woman that questions the law, questions her social role as well, even unconsciously. As a matter of fact, real life in women's prisons, and specifically in the prison of Eleonas of Thebes, it can be ascertained that the modern-day petty-bourgeois behaviour of social roles has been transferred behind the walls as well. The illegal act that occurred was nothing but a momentum. Characteristically enough, the majority of women don't talk of the "crime" they committed, *but of the crime a man urged them to commit*. Which actually means they don't even find a part of themselves in the illegal act that brought them to prison in the first place, thus reproducing the logic of victimisation. The role of the mother was able to stand aside

for them to break the law, but as they experience the condition of confinement, the identity of the mother-protector is quickly brought back into play. They feel that it might just be their only salvation to get away, or their curse since they are forced to live apart from their children. Many times, this role will become a guide for some of the behaviours they will have to put up with in prison, it will become their fear and tolerance. The extortive penal system will step on this weakness, and ask for exchanges of any kind, prioritizing on submissiveness to prison rules, and reports about other prisoners. At the same time, it will cater to humiliate them in many ways, making them bear much more than their own body search, but that of their children as well, who are often of young age, if the prisoner wishes to see them in open visitation *[ed. – i.e. not behind glass]*. In front of this aggressive actual condition, along with their own inability to overcome social identity, they channel their vigor into dealing with inside prison survival, simulating it with the lives they ran outside prison. Frequent visits to the hairdresser, exchange-selling of clothes, make-up.

In the old days, desperate outlaws mainly comprised inmate population. People who had absolutely no hope to see any kind of change to their actual realities, banned from consumption, marginalized by society. A forced no-way-out placement at the lower social scale generates rage, which is a necessary condition for the birth of any liberating attempt. Besides, rage by itself is not political or apolitical. It all depends on which way it's going to want (or actually manage) to be expressed. This rage seems to be missing nowadays, right here and now. On the contrary, here and now seems to be dominated by resignation. While the majority of women are foreigners and do not even know of the events that took place on "September 3rd" street<sup>[3]</sup> or what followed them, they create a large gap between mere survival and wise insurrectionary behaviour. From a subjective standpoint, having the awareness of the actual external condition and the actual concerns, these women still find themselves at significant confusion.

The prison population does not consist of desperate people (setting aside the addicts who due to their addiction on one hand, and the insidious manipulation and repression through psychoactive drugs on the other, have limited capabilities). Nowadays, financial crime runs women's prison, along with large amounts of drug trafficking. No one is in any way excluded from consumption, fact which by itself alienates rage, and in conjunction with social identities, in the end it enables women to remain victims of their own illusions. **This notion of course is not unanimous. There are still, and always will be, some who hold their dignity and**

**head up high. In their minds, the word "staff", as they now want to be called, will always mean "guards/torturers of human beings" and their uniform will always be a target.** Solidarity to prisoners never loses its meaning, as well. Not by defending the prisoner role, but by opposing to confinement itself. To the condition that deprives us of the most precious thing we have, physical freedom, which in itself is associated with bone-crushing restrictions of many kinds. From the disruption of sexual relations to the humiliating dependence on prison machinery for communication. Within this context, you find particular delight in small pleasures that break away from this repressive machine.

Solidarity should remain alive and kicking, supporting the movement of prisoners, unscathed and alert in cases involving political prisoners. In my opinion, solidarity rallies should not be confined to specific ritual dates, as is New Year's for instance, but should keep their reflexes sharp so they can transmute into leverage when correctional whims go out of their way to test prisoners. Solidarity should serve as a tool to give prominence to anarchist prisoners' cases, not person-focused, not based on personal relations, not by guilt-innocence criteria. Besides, no one in this world is innocent, we are all guilty. Some for their consciousness and action against anything that oppresses them, and yet others for their tolerance towards repressive institutions.

I send out my revolutionary regards to those who tenaciously choose to act against the stubbornness of our times.

– *Olga Oikonomidou*

**Olga Ekonomidou** [Ολγα Οικονομίδου], Dikastiki Fylaki Korydallou – Gynaikeies Fylakes, TK 18110, Korydallos, Athens, Greece.

1. *ed. – Transferred out after beating a snitch moved onto her ward; see latest address above.*

2. *ed. – Medieval Latin phrase meaning "the necessary changes having been made".*

3. *transl. – It refers to the fascist pogrom [ed. – against migrants] unleashed with the active participation of police force after the murder of Manolis Kantaris in May 2011 [ed. – stabbed to death during a robbery].*

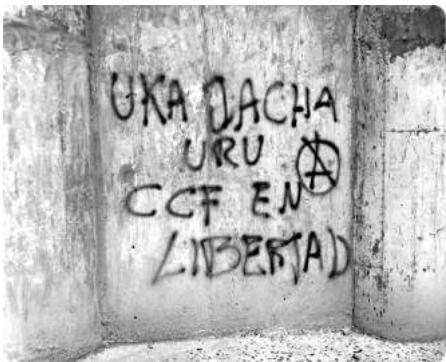


Olga is one of the imprisoned members of the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire (C.C.F.); see **Return Fire vol.1 pg41**. This was her written contribution to a 'Women Against Imprisonment' event at the Patission 61 & Skaramaga occupied space in Athens. Also on the topic of the position of women

in armed revolutionary struggle, she spoke in April via video-connection from prison during the Anarchist Black Cross Festival in Vienna, Austria, along with other Greek prisoners, and also about the conditions around them, solidarity across the walls, the topic of claiming actions (see **Clarification on the Attack on the CGT Headquarters & on the Topic of 'Anonymous Disassociation'**) and membership, and the choice of breaking out of jail. This last point relates to the fact that, **July 8th 2016, the Korydallos prison court convicted all imprisoned C.C.F. members to an additional 115 years in prison each**, with various other alleged collaborators inside and outside given sentences ranging from 75 years inside to 6-year-suspended-sentences, for a foiled escape plan (the second by the comrades since their capture, the first ending with them holding screws hostage with guns in their hands in 2011 but ultimately failed).

*"The attempted prison escape of CCF from our probable graves, confirmed that the struggle for freedom never stops while it sounded the alarm of the state apparatus. It made the damage it would inflict to both the validity and the reliability of the state visible, if it was successful. So an escape plan, became the occasion for a whole repressive operation with revenge for the years our tenacious attitude and non-repentance as its sole purpose. [...] The pursuit of new arrests and raids in homes resulted in two detentions. Of the mother of Christos and Gerasimos Tsakalos [C.C.F. prisoners] and the wife of the latter [ed. – democratic repetition of the practices used by the previous military junta against the relatives of rebel prisoners, once again; see **Who Is It?**]. The criminalization of family relations showed nothing but the clear vengeful intention of the state. To blackmail and emotionally destroy those who have hurt the prestige of its structures. [E]ven six months after, our loved ones, either from within prison or from the restricted areas they are due to court orders, still give us smiles of patience and trust, maintaining their own dignity" (letter from Olga, also in solidarity with Tamara Sol and Natalia Collado; see **Return Fire vol.3 pg79/81**).*

These family targetings led to the C.C.F. members and Aggeliki Spyropoulou (a fugitive from the escape case, she was arrested at home of the C.C.F. brothers' mother) going on hunger strike; they were soon joined by about a dozen more radical prisoners in Greece who combined their demands, and then eight solidarous prisoners in Turkey joined in. After 32 days, the strike finally ended when the leftist Syriza government's Minister of Justice signed an amendment to free their relatives; but still Evi Statiri, the partner of Gerasimos, wasn't let out, so she



The graffiti, in Bolivia, reads; "THE BIG DAY WILL COME" (in Aymara) "FREEDOM FOR THE C.C.F." (in Spanish)

undertook hunger-strike herself (during which there was arson of the office of the Member of Parliament responsible, as Minister of Justice, for the initial pre-trial detaining of the relatives) before release.

Whatever else has been said, comrades of the C.C.F. (and not only) have consistently showed that struggles don't end in prison, but another breach opens from there...

## Aachen Case Verdict

(Germany, Holland, Spain)

[continued from *Return Fire* vol.4 pg70]

The court result: the Dutch comrade is cleared definitively, as is one of the anarchists from Barcelona; but the second was sentenced to 7 years and 6 months for the robberies.

*She speaks Spanish, Italian, English and German: Lisa Dorfer, JVA Willich II, GartenstraSSe 2, 47877 Willich, Germany*

## Good News At Last

### From Italy!

[continued from *Return Fire* vol.4 pg73]

At the trial court in Turin, the Supreme Court confirmed the "non-procedural default of jurisdiction", as already decided at first instance and in appeal, for the principle of not being able to process twice a defendant for the same act. It then closes the case once and for all. The comrades have come out with their heads held high.

## Mónica and Francisco

### Deported (Spain, Chile)

[continued from *Return Fire* vol.3 pg82]

On March 7th, after three and a half years inside, Mónica and Francisco were finally released to Chile, due to a Spanish law that allows for the expulsion of foreign prisoners. They are on the streets!

# MEMORY AS A WEAPON

## Downham Market Food Riot

[ed. – Put out by *The Black Plume* ('a journal of total liberation', based in the English county of Norfolk) as part of their series on rebellious history in that area. Perhaps a little dry and historicist/materialist, but we are glad nonetheless to see efforts at remembering our roots in these pacified times, and 're-storying' our surroundings (a task obviously not only to be left to historians, even amateur ones like us). This tale includes moments of recuperation that, 200 years on, many still have yet to learn how to avoid. Quotes were uncited in the original.]

A wave of discontent swept through England in 1816. Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, France's European neighbours considered the country a liability and signed into the Treaty of Paris the need for an occupational force. The British component of this coalition military – 150,000 strong in total and called by some the Army of Occupation – was led by the Duke of Wellington. Thirty thousand men were sent from the British Army alongside an equal number from Austria, Prussia, and Russia as well as smaller numbers from five other European states.

The financial cost of this occupying force was propped up by France so that, in theory, the countries of the Army of Occupation would not lose out on having to undertake this task. **By 1816, though, Britain's financial situation met dire straits and reverberated throughout society and became what is proverbially known as the "food riots".** Three key factors came together to create this perfect storm: the war irreparably changed the international commercial market; taxation

"According to Walter Benjamin, remembrance plays a profound role for those resisting the momentum of historical progress. In the *Theses on the Concept of History*, remembrance is assigned a condition of redemption when utilized against coercive forces. It holds

the power to make the otherwise historically complete "suffering of the victims of the past" incomplete, creating a realm of continual struggle, a tradition that extends deep into the precedent and up to this very moment. With every connection to the past, those before us rise from the dead and fight with us and within us, creating a discontinuity in the books of history- an opportunity, however slim, to redeem those made invisible by the pens of historians. We call this solidarity, and it exists both inter-temporally and inter-spatially. It reaches across borders as much as beyond the clock. When in solidarity, we act with the strength of all those who struggle. Discontinuity in history will be named here as the *ahistorical break*; a break from the linearity of progress, resulting in a context beyond history. A break in a line, of course, does not recreate a cycle. Breaks in history have occurred since its inception, and every time they do, historians pave over them; they become forgotten, ignored, or reformed into something else. The project of the unsatisfied positions itself in the mode of frequency. On the wave of subversion, the inflection point, the center, is linear history- it is order. Each inflection is a moment of chaos. When the space between inflections and wavelengths are reduced, the moments of chaos overwhelm the moments of order until chaos is continuous and in every moment, rupturing time and space, until the clock stops. In chaos, we breathe, the earth begins to spin again, and the seasons resume their impact upon our lives."

– *Ahistorical Break: A Bridge Between Worlds*



Norwich prison, today

was increased to refill the country's coffers emptied during the conflict; and freak climactic conditions caused much of the year's harvest to fail. Back then, as it is today, those most affected by a failing economy were the poor and working classes.

**Weighted beneath the pressure of high prices and falling living conditions, people across the country took to the streets in 1816 as an expression of their rage. Norfolk was no exception.**

*"It was on the 16th May in this year that an alarming riot occurred in Norwich. Late in the evening a large number of the unemployed assembled in the Market Place and created a disturbance by throwing fire-balls. They next smashed the windows at the Guildhall and proceeded to the New Mills, breaking all the street lamps and the windows of several houses on their way thither. On arriving at the mills, the ringleaders broke into the stores and removed a large quantity of flour, some of which was thrown into the river and some carried away. Returning by way of St Andrew's Bank Street, and Tombland, in each of which localities the mob committed great depredations, they marched to Magdalen Street, and made a hostile demonstration in front of the residence of Dr. Alderson. Upon the doctor coming out to remonstrate with them, the ruffians knocked him down and subjected him to brutal ill-treatment."*

Because the cream of the British Army crop were stationed in France, it fell to the "B Team" troops to fight the rioting people. **The Yeomanry Cavalry, volunteer horse-mounted units used primarily for domestic situations, were tasked in many counties to undertake defence of the State and calm the dissent through force.** These forces were first created in the 1790s following fears of an invasion of Britain by Napoleon and drawn from small-time farmers, with officers drawn from the gentry as was commonplace throughout the military at the time. So what we find in the 1816 riots once again are the working classes pitted against the working classes at the behest of the upper classes and the State.

Though riots raged in Norwich, it was not the only place in Norfolk that saw uprising and insurrection. Violence broke out in Rockland, and Wisbech was occupied by 120 cavalry due to the threat of unrest, but it was Downham where the most spectacular actions occurred.

**Just days after the events in Norwich, three Downham district magistrates – John Thurlow Dering, Mr. Hare, and Mr. Pratt – met at The Crown pub to discuss concerns and demands put forward by**

**many in the local population.** Their solution to the crisis of the moment, which led to families unable to feed themselves due to low wages and high prices, was to offer a slightly increased wage and slightly lower price on flour when bought by families of four or more individuals. This was not nearly good enough. Crowds from Downham and other nearby villages had gathered for the decision and, after hearing the bullshit solution, reacted with outrage. From their announcement in the market place, the magistrates were chased by stick and bludgeon-wielding rioters all the way back to The Crown, where the crowd apparently threatened to defenestrate the trio.

*"Thus pursued, the magistrates attempted an escape by a back way, but were followed and pelted with stones and dirt. Mr. Pratt and Mr. Dering received several violent blows, and with difficulty obtained refuge in different houses – Mr. Dering at Mr. Wales', Mr. Hare at Mr. Lemmon's, and Mr. Pratt at Col. Say's. Mr. Dering was the principal object of the mob's vengeance, and was so hunted that he had to be concealed in a garden for two hours, the excited people declaring they would murder him if they could find him. He and Mr. Hare afterwards escaped to Mr. Safiery's. Shops were meanwhile plundered of their goods, and publicans were compelled to make gratuitous distribution of beer."*



Yeomanry Cavalry from Upwell were sent to combat the looters and rioters in Downham and in the ensuing crackdown wherein many of those participating in the riots were arrested, word came to the small parish of Southery that two men from the village had been taken in. On the morning of 20th May a meeting was held by the parishioners during which it was decided that they would march to Downham

in order to demand the release of their fellow villagers. Picking up others en route, a crowd of between 700 and 800 arrived in Downham armed with sticks, scythes, pitchforks, and even shotguns to join the unrest. The total crowd now numbered around 1500 and comprised both men and women.



**Impression of the famed torching of London's Newgate Jail and the liberation of its prisoners during the 1780 Gordon Riots; see Return Fire vol.1 pg61**

Magistrate Dering, stricken with terror at the sight of this approaching mob, acquiesced immediately to their demands and released both Southery men. **It seems the crowd took this small victory as fuel for the possibilities of their communal power and, rather than dispersing in satisfaction, began demanding that the doors of Downham prison be thrown open and all inmates released.** Dering, afraid, agreed once more and the prison was emptied, and the inmates disappeared into the mass so that they would not be recaptured.

Unfortunately not everybody got away. The Upwell Yeomanry, with the help of special constables (volunteer police types), were able to seize 19 of the rioters following a reading of the Riot Act by John Dering at 5pm in the market square. This caused the mob to peter out and disperse, leaving Downham quiet once again. It is said some of the rioters went onto the Cambridgeshire town of Littleport and continued their attack on the injustices of the State when riots broke out there on 22nd May but only one man by the name of Thomas Sindall appears to be confirmed at both outbreaks.

Of the 19 that were arrested in Downham, nine men and six women were sentenced to death following a brief trial in August 1816. Thirteen of these sentences were commuted but two still hung at Norwich Castle: Daniel Harwood, 22, who was taken from a pregnant wife; and Thomas Thody, 25, who was taken from a wife and two children. There is no word of what happened to their families.

The food riots of 1816 continued to rage throughout the rest of the country but the Downham incident appears to have been the final mass disturbance relating to the post-Napoleonic fallout in Norfolk.

# 'An Enemy of the Desire to Create'

[ed. – We encourage a critical look at this poetic 1967 text, so wonderfully hostile to left- and right-wings of domination, to authoritarian communists and capitalists of all stripes. If it is admittedly rather pro-'modern technology' (imagining the reduction of work hours that has never been the aim of those producing such tools – see *New Technologies, Extraterrestrial Exploitation & the Future of Capitalism*), perhaps this could be chalked down to the technophilic delirium in some rebel quarters during the '60s when, as they claim below, "a generation, drowned in mortification, felt such a rage to live", including reaching for rather dubious 'liberators'. Of course, work has now escaped the factory (in the case of 'feminised' labour, never having lived there in the first place) and permeated much of social life; this chapter is still remarkably prescient about the shifts that may have only been hinted at in those days.]

*The duty to produce alienates the passion for creation. Productive labour is part and parcel of the technology of law and order.*

*The working day grows shorter as the empire of conditioning extends.*

In an industrial society which confuses work and productivity, the necessity of producing has always been an enemy of the desire to create. What spark of humanity, of a possible creativity, can remain alive in a being dragged out of sleep at six every morning, jolted about in suburban trains, deafened by the racket of machinery, bleached and steamed by meaningless sounds and gestures, spun dry by statistical controls, and tossed out at the end of the day into the entrance halls of railway stations, those cathedrals of departure for the hell of weekdays and the nugatory paradise of weekends, where the crowd communes in weariness and boredom? **From adolescence to retirement each 24-hour cycle repeats the same shattering bombardment, like bullets hitting a window: mechanical repetition, time-which-is-money, submission to bosses, boredom, exhaustion.** From the butchering of youth's energy to the gaping wound of old age, life cracks in every direction under the blows of forced labour. Never before has a civilization reached such a degree of contempt for life; never before has a generation, drowned in mortification, felt such a rage to live. The same people who are murdered slowly in the mechanized slaughterhouses of work are also arguing, singing, drinking, dancing, making love, holding the streets, picking up weapons and inventing a new poetry. Already the front against forced labour is being formed; its gestures of refusal are moulding the consciousness of the future. Every call for productivity in the conditions chosen by capitalist and Soviet economy is a call to slavery.

The necessity of production is so easily proved that any hack philosopher of industrialism can fill ten books with it. Unfortunately for these neo-economist thinkers, these proofs belong to the nineteenth century, a time when the misery of the working classes made the right to work the counterpart of the right to be a slave, claimed at the dawn of time by prisoners about to be massacred. Above all it was a question of surviving, of not disappearing physically. The imperatives of production are the imperatives of survival; *from now on, people want to live, not just to survive.*

The *tripalium* is an instrument of torture. *Labor* means 'suffering'. We are unwise to forget the origin of the words 'travail' and 'labour'. At least the nobility never forgot their own dignity and the indignity which marked their bondsmen. The aristocratic contempt for work reflected the master's contempt for the dominated classes; work was the expiation to which they were condemned to all eternity by the divine decree which had willed them, for impenetrable reasons, to be inferior. Work took its place among the sanctions of Providence as the punishment for poverty, and because it was the means to a future salvation such a punishment could take on the attributes of pleasure. Basically, work was less important than submission.

The bourgeoisie does not dominate, it exploits. It does not need to be master, it prefers to *use*. **Why has nobody seen that the principle of productivity simply replaced the principle of feudal authority? Why has nobody wanted to understand?**

Is it because work ameliorates the human condition and saves the poor, at least in illusion, from eternal damnation? Undoubtedly, but today it seems that the carrot of happier tomorrows has smoothly replaced the carrot of salvation in the next world. In both cases the *present* is always under the heel of oppression.

Is it because it transforms nature? Yes, but what can I do with a nature ordered in terms of profit and loss, in a world where the inflation of techniques conceals the deflation of the use-value of life? Besides, just as the sexual act is not intended to procreate, but makes children by accident, organized labour transforms the surface of continents as a by-product, not a purpose. *Work to transform the world? Tell me another one.* The world is being transformed in the direction prescribed by the existence of forced labour; which is why it is being transformed so badly.

Perhaps man [sic] realizes himself in his forced labour? **In the nineteenth century the concept of work retained a vestige of the notion of creativity.** Zola describes a nailsmiths' contest in which the workers competed in the perfection of their tiny masterpiece. Love of the trade and the vitality of an already smothered creativity incontestably helped man to bear ten or fifteen hours which nobody could have stood if some kind of pleasure had not slipped into it. The survival of the craft conception allowed each worker to contrive a precarious comfort in the hell of the factory. But Taylorism [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg28*] dealt the death-blow to a mentality which had been carefully fostered by archaic capitalism. It is useless to expect even a caricature of creativity from the conveyor-belt. **Nowadays ambition and the love of the job well done are the indelible mark of defeat and the most mindless submission.** Which is why, wherever submission is demanded, the old ideological fart wends its way, from the *Arbeit Macht Frei* of the concentration camps to the homilies of Henry Ford<sup>[1]</sup> and Mao Tse-tung [ed. – see *Who Is It?*].

**So what is the function of forced labour? The myth of power exercised jointly by the master and God drew its coercive force from the unity of the feudal system. Destroying the unitary myth, the power of the bourgeoisie inaugurated, under the flag of crisis, the reign of ideologies, which can never attain, separately or together, a fraction of the efficacy of myth. The dictatorship of productive work stepped into the breach. Its mission is physically to weaken the majority of men [sic], collectively to castrate and stupefy them in order to make them receptive to the least pregnant, least virile, most senile ideologies in the entire history of falsehood.**

Most of the proletariat at the beginning of the nineteenth century had been physically



enervated, systematically broken by the torture of the workshop. Revolts came from artisans [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg85], from privileged or unemployed groups, not from workers shattered by fifteen hours of labour. Isn't it disturbing that the reduction of working time came just when the spectacular ideological miscellany produced by consumer society was beginning effectively to replace the feudal myths destroyed by the young bourgeoisie? (People really have worked for a refrigerator, a car, a television set. Many still do, 'invited' as they are to consume the passivity and empty time that the 'necessity' of production 'offers' them.)

Statistics published in 1938 indicated that the use of the most modern technology then available would reduce necessary working time to three hours a day. Not only are we a long way off with our seven hours, but after wearing out generations of workers by promising them the happiness which is sold today on the installment plan, the bourgeoisie (and its Soviet equivalent) pursue man's destruction outside the workshop. **Tomorrow they will deck out their five hours of necessary wear and tear with a time of 'creativity' which will grow just as fast as they can fill it with the impossibility of creating anything (the famous 'leisure explosion').**

It has been quite correctly written: "China faces gigantic economic problems; for her, productivity is a matter of life and death." Nobody would dream of denying it. What seems important to me is not the economic imperatives, but the manner of responding to them. The [Chinese] Red Army in 1917 was a new kind of organization. The Red Army in 1960 is an army such as is found in capitalist countries. Circumstances have shown that its effectiveness has been far below the potential of a revolutionary militia. In the same way, the planned Chinese economy, by refusing to allow federated groups to organize their work autonomously, condemns itself to become another example of **the perfected form of capitalism called socialism** [ed. – see *'Tools of the Technology'*]. Has anyone bothered to study the modes of work of primitive [sic] peoples, the importance of play and creativity, the incredible yield obtained by methods which the application of modern technology would make a hundred times more efficient? Obviously not. **Every appeal for productivity comes from above.** But only creativity is spontaneously rich. It is not from 'productivity' that a full life is to be expected, it is not 'productivity' that will produce an enthusiastic collective response to economic needs. But what can we say when we know how the cult of work is honoured from Cuba to China, and how well the virtuous pages of [François] Guizot<sup>[1]</sup> would sound in a May Day speech?

To the extent that automation and cybernetics [ed. – see the supplement to *Return Fire* vol.4; Caught in the Net] foreshadow the massive replacement of workers by mechanical slaves, forced labour is revealed as belonging purely to the barbaric practices needed to maintain order. Thus power manufactures the dose of fatigue necessary for the passive assimilation of its televised diktats. What carrot is worth working for, after this? The game is up; there is nothing to lose anymore, not even an illusion. The organization of work and the organization of leisure are the blades of the castrating shears whose job is to improve the race of fawning dogs. One day, will we see strikers, demanding automation and a ten-hour week, choosing, instead of picketing, to make love in the factories, the offices and the culture centres? Only the planners, the managers, the union bosses and the sociologists would be surprised and worried. Not without reason; after all, their skin is at stake.



1. ed. – Arch capitalist Henry Ford famously expanded market for his products by raising salaries while increasing mass-production and credit, thus undercutting the threat of the more revolutionary demands of the labour movement of his time by turning producers into consumers (encouraging even the most precarious workers to aspire to inclusion), heading off the last major crisis that capitalism faced. John Connor reminds us that he was big on "psychological profiling and home checks on his Detroit workers so that he also had 'scientific' control of their morals and character ensuring they were hard-working and subservient. (Despite – or perhaps because of, as we'll see below – of his prematurely Modern attitudes to managing production, Henry Ford was also prepared to resort to cruder 19th-century union-bashing techniques – Pinkertons – and even to issue the Tsarist anti-Semitic forgery Protocols of the Elders of Zion as a pamphlet to his employees, *The Eternal Jew*[...] The Nazis hailed Henry Ford as "the American Hitler" and saw him as the New World's *fuhrer*. More significantly, they learned Ford's techniques of mass production and car consumption to hold the favour of the German lower middle class on assuming power.) Fitting that his great innovation, the assembly line – where workers were forced to work at the rate of not just one machine, but all machines in one factory – was modelled on the disassembly lines of Detroit's slaughter-houses, where living flesh was butchered and commodified."

2. ed. – French Prime Minister 1847-1848, said only enrichment by hard work merited suffrage.

## The Origins of Victimisation

[ed. – It's easy to sympathise with this revision of the received wisdom about the opening of the 'Years of Lead' in Italy, when also here in the U.K. there has always been a chorus (usually from the most dubious of sources or anonymous comment threads) ready to cry 'false flag' or 'agent provocateur' in the face of blows struck and claimed by anarchists, which has never convinced us... This account may come across as rather brusque, but is an important reminder of what provocations we must possibly face if struggles gain traction, without cutting and running. However we would argue that the response to repression needs more than increasing attacks alone (especially when we end up overcommitting our energy and resources towards this goal as a singular fetish) so as not to end up in the dead-end of a duel with the State... but that's another conversation.]

"We commit to freeing the prelate Marco Ussia as soon as the Church makes a statement in favour of release of political prisoners detained in Spain... Our action's purpose is to place the Church before its conscience and its responsibilities, in these critical moments for the Spanish people, since after 27 years of fascist dictatorship the Spanish democrats who are claiming a minimum of freedom of expression and of association recognized by the charter of human rights, are still in prison..." – Kidnapping of Ussia, April 1967, Rome: First of May Group'Sacco & Vanzetti' [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg86]

"The science of USA in the service of crimes... we are targeting one by one the people responsible for the genocide in Vietnam! [President] Johnson doesn't give a damn about the marches of peace, we are using his own weapons: dynamite and sabotage!" – Attack against the American company Dow Chemical, 30th of March 1968, Milan: Anarchist Group... (the rest of the flyer unreadable because burned)

"We condemn the Church for its activity against the revolution... for the criminal act of supporting the Spanish fascism..." – Attack against the church St. Babylas, 10th of June 1968, Milan: Anarchists

"Comrade, destroy the banks... destroy the churches... destroy the universities... raid the department stores" – Attack at Rinascence, 30th of August 1968, Milan: Anarchists

"Last minute: the police killed again, two farmhands in Sicily! It is their own sacred mission. People revolt! Against authoritarianism, against the laws, the State and the Church that sanctifies everything. Long live anarchy!" – Attack with dynamite against the municipal offices of Genoa, 3rd of December 1968 (in solidarity with the dead people of Avola): Revolutionary Group Carlo Cafiero<sup>[1]</sup>

*"Comrade worker, inside the banks there is wealth... destroy the banks... Within the universities lies the culture of science, destroy the universities, inside the churches lies the dynast of mind... destroy the churches. Inside the department stores consumer goods can be found, destroy them!" – Second attack at Rinascente, 15th of December 1968, Milan: Anarchist Brigade Ravachol [ed. – see 'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are']*

*"American science is a tool for enslavement of people... the amazing space expeditions are not feeding the exploited." – Attack with dynamite at the NATO base Camp Darby, 3rd of January 1969, Pisa: Anarchist Group J. Most<sup>[2]</sup>*

*"Defendants! Burn the judges' gowns! Turn the courts of law into a battlefield... the struggle continues with all available means against the authority of the State and of the*

*Church. Greetings!" – Attacks with dynamite at the Courthouse and at the Ministry of Education, 27th and 31st of*

*March 1969, Rome: Anarchist Revolutionary Association for the Social Revolution*

The historical interpretation of a certain anarchism has always been partial, manipulated and often as bad as the one of the official historians. The purpose of this writing is to reach the source of this Victimation which corrupted, and is still corrupting, the Italian anarchist movement for more than forty years, since the massacre of Piazza Fontana<sup>[3]</sup>. Risking to be considered a "revisionist", before I develop my theory I have to specify some issues. Although I am sure that it was the State which placed the bomb in Piazza Fontana, I will accompany this my certainty with some "other" certainties:

*– the belief that many of the attacks presented as fascist by the extra-parliamentary left of that time, were indeed anarchists attacks completed with responsibility claims of high reliability*

*– the belief that Giuseppe Pinelli was not a pacifist, a nonviolent, a martyr of the left, a little saint of democracy, but instead, an anarchist revolutionary that shortly before he was murdered by Calabresi<sup>[4]</sup> and his colleagues had actively and specifically collaborated with an anarchist organization engaged in armed struggle with bombs and kidnappings across half of Europe, with International anarchist group First of May<sup>[5]</sup>, direct expression of FIJL<sup>[6]</sup>, and as a natural consequence, like every anarchist consistent with what he did, he believed in revolutionary violence*

*– the belief that Gianfranco Bertoli was an individualist anarchist - not a fascist, a puppet or a useful idiot in the hands of "corrupted" intelligence agencies, as many anarchists shamelessly assert even now –*

*and that his action was perfectly included in the tradition of propaganda of the deed [ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg84], of anarchist individualistic terrorism.*

Having said that, and after putting these few points of references, we can start our journey through the past dispelling some myths. The Piazza Fontana massacre was not for anarchists, as many historians affirm, "the loss of innocence", but instead, the birth of a new figure, of a new role accepted in fear of repression. A role steeped in a pathetic and manipulated "innocentification". The anarchist-victim of the system, the anarchist-naive child who plays easy with revolution, with the risk of being approached by cover agents and turned into a tool for power. Almost all anarchists voluntary or involuntarily, with only a few exceptions, were wearing the same cloak in those years. **After Piazza Fontana there was a spreading of legalistic and acquitting counter-investigation<sup>[7]</sup> in which the caricature of the bloodthirsty anarchist bomber was replaced by an even more idiotic caricature of the anarchist helpless victim predestined by the State violence.** Many joined the game, either for a quiet life or to get their comrades out of prison, but someone went even further, contributing on their own to this new "investigative" trend through no less legalistic, caricatural and snivelling counter-investigations.

We can not understand entirely the tragic events of Milan and the following confusion and panic among the anarchists without making a brief reference to the slow but gradual evolution in which a part of the movement had been involved in years between 1962 and 1969. Across Italy, during these years, the anarchists of action lived moments of great vitality, I would say almost of renaissance. Various nucleus and affinity groups, very mobile, with young and not so young people, increased the strength of their actions, from the attacks of low intensity with nitrate to more powerful attacks with dynamite. This upgrade was accelerated thanks to the influence of the Spanish FIJL and of their direct expression: the international group First of May. This evolution occurred at the same time in other European countries with better results: like the Angry Brigade in England, the Hashish Rebels in Germany, GARI<sup>[8]</sup> in France. **In Italy the collective shock of the State massacre abruptly interrupted this evolution, blocking its development.** This massacre and the subsequent Pinelli's murder represented for the anarchist movement the "original sin" after which nothing will be like before. From that moment the "games" stopped and the positive trend that got through the movement at that time turned into a strong, although not permanent, standstill.



There are many legends and falsities built about those years. One of most persisting is the one that see the anarchism of the 60's as the weakest link in the revolutionary movement. An anarchist movement struck by repression and fabrication precisely because of its hypothetical, intrinsic weakness and because it could have been infiltrated easily. Another falsity (to say the least) concerns the roles of clown and slanderers, which our victimisation and the left-wing intellectuals assigned to the actors of this tragedy. Pinelli the innocent martyr, pacifist of "anarchy does not meant bombs but the justice in freedom", Valpreda the anarchist individualist, naive and manipulable, who claimed with "head held high" his innocence, his being just all talk of "bombs, blood, anarchy" and no action. **We, the anarchists, were the first responsible for such distortion of reality.** A distortion which stems from the need to defend ourselves from an accusation considered defamatory, a massacre that hits regular poor souls, random customers of a bank for farmers, mostly family-based. This alternate reality was so absorbed by anarchists, and even by the same actors of that tragedy, that every good thing done in past years deliberately was erased, and buried. The "panic of defence" brought to a general stampede and to an almost total fall back; in these years just few examples to the contrary, but significant ones: shooting of Commissioner Calabresi and the massacre at the police headquarters in Milan<sup>[9]</sup> by the anarchist Bertoli, who would dearly pay the consequences of his action, not only with more than 20 years in prison, but through the constant defamation and almost total isolation by a frightened and crazed anarchist movement.

The theory I want to support with this my article is that the so-called "strategy of tension" was set-up against anarchist movement not because it was the weakest link, but instead because it was the only segment of the revolutionary "left" credible for set-up a such plot in those years. Mainly for two reasons, first because in that historic moment it was the most active in terms of armed actions, bombs and even with a background of two kidnappings<sup>[10]</sup>, and second for its international contacts with groups like First of May and FIJL which carried out armed actions across half of Europe for years. It would have been more difficult to set up a

fabrication against the communists, at time less active in terms of armed struggle. Not without reason the only communist whom they tried to implicate in the Piazza Fontana events was Feltrinelli [*transl. – influential publisher, communist militant, died under mysterious circumstances in 1972*], due to his contacts with some of these anarchists, particularly with Corradini and Vincileone<sup>[11]</sup>. A concrete example of the "operative" contacts of the revolutionary publisher with those anarchists was when some weeks before Che Guevara<sup>[12]</sup>'s death in Bolivia, through the mediation of these two comrades, Fertinelli sought for support of the First of May to organize joint solidarity actions with the Bolivian guerrillas. After Guevara's death, the First of May started up a wave of coordinated attacks across Europe without precedents: November 12th 1967 in Bonn three bombs exploded at the Greek, Bolivian and Spanish embassies; in Rome at the Venezuelan embassy; in Milan in the Spanish Tourist Office; in Hague at the US, Greek and Spanish embassies; in Madrid at the embassy of USA; in Geneva at the Spanish Tourist Office.

Ten coordinated attacks in a single day: the organizational skills of anarchists in Europe had no equal, all thanks to the libertarian youth and their will to act and coordinate; this array of forces took place when in Italy Fertinelli's GAP [*transl. – Marxist "Groups of Partisan Action"*] were barely more than an idea and the Red Brigades were still far from their birth, since their first attack took place in 1971. We can say it with certainty that the cancer of the anarchist Victimation was born on December 12th of 1969 among the ruins of the Agrarian Bank in Piazza Fontana. A glimmer was already seen on April 25th of 1969, always in Milan, on the Resistance Day, when small incendiary devices based on nitrate salt and gasoline exploded in the currency exchange office at the central station and at the Trade Fair, which had been targeted (as power structures) by the student movement in those days. The smoke of fire at the station sent a dozen of passengers to emergency room for examination, but were immediately released from hospital; the other mechanism, at the trade fair, broke some windows: so harmless that even the "Rivista Anarchica" [*transl. – magazine of Italian Anarchist Federation*] called them paper bombs in March 1971. The devices were very like those used by anarchists at Rinascente [*transl. – huge luxury department store in Milan*] concerning the ignition (there is a reference at the beginning of this article, in a excerpt of the responsibility claim): the usual electric resistance, the usual gasoline bottle and the usual clock as a timer. The attackers' intention was not of course to cause victims, there had been phone calls to the

police which heralded the "explosion" at the station, some newspapers talked also about a claim of responsibility, about flyers found at the scene, as it had already happened in the previous Milanese anarchist attacks. The newspapers made a big deal about these "dreadful" attacks. The Milanese anarchist movement immediately covered its own back talking about provocation and putting on the same level these attacks considered fascist and the anarchist attacks at the Ministry of Education and at the courthouse of Rome which were claimed by the "Anarchist International 'Marius Jacob'"<sup>[13]</sup>. The theory of conspiracy, shitting on actions by their own in order to clean themselves, was the prelude of Piazza Fontana. For these mysterious explosions were held responsible some comrades, which we already had the chance to meet, Giovanni Corradini and Eliane Vincileone. Together with them the young Paolo Braschi was arrested as well: the luckiest one was Ivo della Savia who managed to escape the arrest, becoming a fugitive. These four comrades were contributors of the journal "Materialismo e Libertà".

**Before I move on with our story, I would better comment briefly the effervescent cauldron which was the anarchist Milan at the end of the '60s.** In Milan during that period of protests and large liberal ferments, among the many experiences of struggle two small anarchist groups took their first steps. The "older" group included Ivo della Savia and Braschi, with more experience with explosives, in touch with Corradini and Vincileone, in close contact with the youth anarchist federations of other countries, with FIJL and First of May. In the youngest group, the most "boisterous" one, Valpreda, Claps and Derrico took part, who were considered "out-of-control" by the Milanese milieu, with less practical experience but with an individualist anarchist strong mind. They called themselves the "iconoclasts" and published a paper named "Land and Freedom" in which they expressed quite plainly their "violent" ideas. They will get involved in the fabrications of Piazza Fontana and they will end up as a consenting meat for the grinder of various counter-investigations, to which however they will owe their freedom. The Milanese political police were more concerned about the group that was revolved around Corradini and Vincileone, according to their words. This concern for the couple was result mainly of their international contacts, in a police report we could read: "At least until the end of 1962 they were a centre of anarchist activism that always attracted a number of youngsters. In a similar milieu was developed, although it couldn't be confirmed if and which part played the couple Corradini, the kidnapping of vice consul Isu Ellas". Soon, the movement forgot these two militant persons, maybe

too disturbingly for an anarchism that from this period came out "purged" of its own interior.

The specific anarchist organizations FAI / GIA / GAF [*transl. – Italian Anarchist Federation/Groups of Anarchist Initiative/Federated Anarchist Groups*] after the oppressive wave that followed Piazza Fontana, will try to dampen their internal conflicts and at least in one thing they will manage to join up: to consider as provocation all those actions of some note claimed by anarchist over the past months. An important testimony regarding these years is being given by Ivo della Savia himself who as fugitive gave an incredible interview in "Corriere Della Sera" [*transl. – important daily mainstream newspaper*] in which he narrated with no reserve to a journalist the origin of the anarchism of action in Italy: "*in 1963 we have witnessed the formation of the first anarchist groups which started to carry out the direct actions. By direct action we mean the attacks. I took part in these groups structured in a very rigid way. There wasn't any problem regarding the numbers, that is we were not concerned if we would be many... the action itself would have made a very clear choice... from 1963 till 1967 we have witnessed in Italy the material constitution, the articulation, the preconditions in order to reach a certain situation, to guarantee more effectiveness, the greater connection... These days the police found themselves in front of a new affair, that was disorienting: anarchists were striking with a periodical regularity, and every two-three months there was something happening in the quiet Italian society...*

*You can see, as an example, the attacks against the Spanish embassy in Naples and the failed attack against the same embassy in Genoa..."*

This evolution will be interrupted suddenly by the widespread of paranoid conspiracies that will follow after the massacre of Piazza Fontana. The "wallowing of self-pity" will reach its zenith after the murder of Pinelli, with the distortion of this comrade's image by majority of the movement in a victimized, pacifistic and democratic figure: dozens of assumptions, millions of trial documents to confirm the most abstruse theories about international conspiracies, black plots, red plots, opposite extremists, CIA, KGB, "corrupted" intelligence agencies. **From all these trials paperwork and from the subsequent and parallel counter-investigations a new "science" was born, which will have in anarchism of action one of its most illustrious victims.** In the name of this "science", named "strategy of tension", in every firecracker or bomb in years that will follow, the accusation of provocation will show up regularly as stopwatch. Every time an

anarchist group strikes, the mummies of "revolutionary" immobility even today dig out this very old and useful theory against anyone who dares to turn into action those things about which thousand other people keep babbling. The Italian anarchism in the beginning of 70's will be characterized intensely by the campaign regarding the liberation of Valpreda<sup>[14]</sup>. A campaign that was completely focused at the judicial part, almost completely concentrated at the judicial defence and at the pursuance of pathetic approval by the democratic public opinion.

The cherry on top of this campaign was the nomination of the "illegalist" Valpreda in the voting list of "Manifesto" [transl. – *important Communist daily newspaper*], an attempt that was a failure since he didn't get elected. Whoever went off the legality rails was automatically accused for provocation and lynched ideologically.

Outside of the borders of this "beautiful country" the comrades who had cooperated with Pinelli and his "Black Cross"<sup>[15]</sup>, the youthful federations, FIJL, First of May, the English Black Cross, were all confused and dazed. The information they were receiving from Italy was contradictory, the Italian movement was totally in the grip of the infiltrators-hunt, it seemed like you couldn't trust anyone, completely in panic, the Italian anarchists were seeing secret agents and provocations in every corner of the street. An enlightening example for this widespread and contagious paranoia is offered by Octavio Alberola, one of the founders of First of May, in the book "El Anarquismo Espanol y la accion revolucionaria, 1961-1974", co-written with Ariane Cransac in 1975, when he starts to number the actions occurred in those years he stops, confessing that after a certain date onward he will not speak about Italy due to the provocations and fabrications in motion in that country, which made scarcely credible the actions carried out in that period of time. These doubts of Alberola indicate the confusion and the panic that was reigning within the Italian anarchist milieu, where the huge majority was found unready in front of these tragic events, and couldn't be able to give a collective answer so aggressive as the violence and the repression which struck them. At that moment the Italian movement transmitted only discouragement, Victimization and doubts to movements of other countries, and all these when between French, Spanish, Swiss, English, and Italian youthful federations had been established strong contacts, which had already produced the first concrete results, by the way putting in a difficult position the old immobilist of European anarchism, for example Montseny<sup>[16]</sup> of the FAI [Iberian Anarchist Federation] gets very busy to tone down these new fermentations.

At the 9th of September 1970, the youthful federations and the First of May in memory of comrade Pinelli exploded several devices simultaneously in Paris, London, Manchester and Birmingham in buildings of Italian delegations. It was the only action of a certain range carried out in Europe for Pinelli. This insufficient revolutionary solidarity was due to the legal defensive line pursued by the comrades in Italy.

For some people outside of the borders of Italy to remember Valpreda too, we will need to wait until the February of 1972 when a bomb in his solidarity exploded at the Italian embassy in Brussels. In Italy things were not so different, there were very few important actions (which got off the rails of civil symbolic protest) to frame in reaction against the events of Piazza Fontana. **Few actions, but significant**; at the 17th of May 1972 the commissioner Calabresi, the most responsible for the murder of Pinelli, got killed outside his house by unknowns. Even in this case the indignation of a part of movement sprang up: unbelievable but even many anarchists, including Valpreda, cried foul. Lack of someone responsible to slander, they attacked this action by raving about "conspiracies" and about a spurious usefulness from the side of authority to eliminate a disturbing witness. With no scruples, they tried to smear an exemplary, lucid, surgical action.

This operation of slander failed, the whole movement became galvanized, Lotta Continua praised this gesture of revenge, some decades after some of its former militants will bear the huge cost of imprisonment because of their former enthusiasm. **With this date the historians will start the so called "Years of Lead".** Exactly one year after, at the 17th of May 1973, in front of the Milanese police headquarters that had just completed the unveiling of memorial tablet of Calabresi, the individualist anarchist Gianfranco Bertoli launched a handgrenade that resulted in several dead and injured people.

The comrade, after the arrest, claimed with pride his being an anarchist individualist and explained his gesture as a revenge for Pinelli's murder: slandered publicly by the whole anarchist movement, the kind souls of "Revolution" turned him immediately in a fascist on payroll of the corrupted intelligence agencies. Among the few exceptions "Ponte della Ghisolfa", a Milanese anarchist association, that despite its dissociation from this "insane" (sic.) gesture, it recognized him as a comrade (that did wrong, but always a comrade). Many years after, persuaded by a democratic magistrate they will change their minds, but this is another story, very ugly, that I don't want to narrate. An ugly story of manipulations and political interests<sup>[17]</sup>.

Let me finish with a consideration, in my opinion the deepest meaning of what those years represented for anarchists, is well given in the opposite and distorted interpretations made by the same movement of the two, in my view, most emblematic figures of that period of time, Pinelli and Bertoli, victim and executioner:

– *Pinelli: martyr of anarchy, good father, worker, conscious proletarian, avowed pacifist.*

– *Bertoli: fascist, crazy, provocateur, spy, drug-addicted subproletarian, violent, thief.*

**It was not the bourgeois press that presented them that way, but our own newspapers, "Umanità Nova" [ed. – weekly newspaper of Italian Anarchist Federation] in primis.** These two masks are telling us a lot about what the Italian anarchist movement became after the panic that followed the bomb in Piazza Fontana. They are showing us a decay, a retreat in front of the repression. We will bear the high cost of these fears, of this lack of courage with a stall that will extend throughout time. **Maybe you are wondering why I drug up these old stories? Because I am convinced that if some knots of the past do not get untied, we risk to fall continuously in the same mistakes.**

And I am still more convinced that the answer to repression is the main field where every revolutionary movement is playing its most important game, of its own credibility. Very often the repressing operations are being answered with backtracking exclusively at the legal level, merely crying about fabrications, claiming their own guilty as innocent, practically demanding justice to the court, relying only on the lawyers. For this reason I believe that critically revisiting the history can help us untie these knots in order to move forward faster.

*"Nothing beautiful and new can be written on old and filthy pages."*

– C.C.F. [ed. – see *Rebels Behind Bars; Yet Another Fenced World*]

## TIMELINE

**29.09.62:** kidnap of the Spanish vice consul Isu Elias in Milan. Anarchists.

**06.03.62:** attacks at the headquarters of the airline company Iberia and at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIS) in Rome, at the same time as a bomb at the Ministry of Technology in Madrid, with claim of responsibility by CIL [Iberian Liberation Council] (issued by the Defesa Interior). Anarchists.

**27.11.64:** two molotovs destroy the Seminary of Opus Dei Rome. Anarchists.

**17.12.64:** firebombs inside Vatican and at the Pontifical University. Anarchists.

**02.01.65:** bomb at the Spanish embassy in Napoli. Anarchists.

**25.04.65:** bomb at the offices of the Spanish airline company Iberia in Milan. Anarchists.

**31.04.66:** kidnap of prelate Ussia. First of May Group 'Sacco & Vanzetti'.

**12.11.67:** Rome – bomb at the Venezuelan embassy, Milan – bomb at the Spanish Tourist Office, at the same time other attacks in Geneva and Bonn claimed by First of May and by International Revolutionary Solidarity Movement.

**03.03.68:** Turin, bomb at the American consulate, simultaneously other bombs in Hague and London, claimed by First of May Group and by International Revolutionary Solidarity Movement.

**26.05.68:** firebomb at a Citroen dealership in Milan. International Anarchist Group.

**16.06.68:** firebomb at the Bank of Italy, signed by "Anarchists".

**23.07.68:** firebomb at the Ambrosian Library in Milan. Anarchists.

**20.08.68:** bomb at the Cinema Palace of Venice [transl. – main venue of the Venice Film Festival], claimed by Anarchist Group 'M. Nettlau'<sup>[18]</sup>.

**23.08.68:** unexploded bombs at Milan Cathedral, at the churches of St. Babylas and at the church of St. Ambrose, claimed by "Anarchists".

**25.08.68:** bomb at commercial metropolitan police station in Milan. Anarchists.

**31.08.68:** failed incendiary attack at Rinascente, signed by Anarchist Group Ravachol

**04.09.68:** during the international anarchist conference in Carrara the international Black Cross was born; Giuseppe Pinelli is responsible for the Italian section.

**03.12.68:** bomb at the municipal offices of Genoa, signed by Anarchist Group Carlo Cafiero.

**23-24.12.68:** second attack at Rinascente, signed by Anarchist Group Ravachol.

**25.12.68:** TNT bomb at the Courthouse of Livorno, signed by Anarchist Group People's Justice.

**03.01.69:** attack at the NATO base Camp Darby in Pisa, signed by Anarchist Group J. Most.

**19.01.69:** Milan, bomb at the police barracks. Anarchists.

**26.01.69:** Milan, bomb at the Spanish Tourist Office, signed by Anarchist Group Barcelona 39.

**January 1969:** Turin, bomb in front of the church S. Christina, signed by Direct Action Group.

**08.03.69:** Vercelli, attack against the police headquarter; anarchists arrested.

**27.03.69:** Rome, TNT bomb at the Ministry of Education, signed by Anarchist International Marius Jacob Group.

**31.03.69:** Rome, TNT bomb at the Courthouse, signed by Anarchist International Marius Jacob Group.

**03.04.69:** Turin, bomb at the Memorial to Carabinieri, signed by Anarchists.

**25.04.69:** Milan, bombs at the FIAT stand at the Fair Trade and at the currency exchange office in Central Station.

**01-03.05.69:** Milan, arrest of the anarchists Paolo Faccioli, Paolo Braschi, Ivo Della Savia (fugitive), Eliane Vincleone, Giovanni Corradini: all accused for bombs 25th of April.

**07.12.69:** Corradini and Vincleone released.

**12.12.69:** massacre of Piazza Fontana.

**15.12.69:** Pinelli was murdered.

**1. ed.** – Named after a 1846–1892 anarchist who set up a rural Swiss haven for fugitive anarchists and was among 30 initiating an insurrection in Benevento province of Italy in 1877, taking two villages before capture by government troops.

**2. ed.** – Named after Johann, a German-born U.S. anarchist, a notorious 1880's rabble-rouser.

**3. transl.** – The Piazza Fontana bombing: 12th December 1969 at 4:47pm a bomb exploded at the headquarters of National Agrarian Bank (some 200 metres from Cathedral), killing 17 people and wounding 88; the same afternoon three more bombs exploded in Rome (one at 4:55pm at the underground passage that leads to National Bank of Work, and the other two between 5:20 and 5:30pm, in front of the Altar of Fatherland and at the entrance of Central Museum of Risorgimento, that is of Italian unification; with a total of 17 wounded people), while a fifth in Milan was found unexploded in the headquarters of the Italian Commercial Bank. The same year, on April 25th a bomb exploded at the Fiat stand at a Milan trade fair, in which five people were injured, and there was also a bomb discovered at the city's central station. The Piazza Fontana bombing was initially attributed to anarchists. After over 80 arrests were made, anarchist suspect Giuseppe Pinelli died after "falling" from the fourth floor window of the police station where he was being held. One of the police officers who were interrogating Pinelli at that moment was the Commissioner Luigi Calabresi, murdered in revenge in 1972. Two members of communist organization Lotta Continua, Adriano Sofri and Giorgio Pietrostefani were convicted of plotting his assassination, and other one, Ovidio Bompresso, was sentenced for carrying it out; all of them were sentenced to 22 years of prison (Sofri was released in 2012; Pietrostefani is still fugitive in France, according the Mitterrand Doctrine those convicted for violent acts in Italy of far-left during the "Years of Lead" would not be extradited; Bompresso was released in 2006 for serious health reasons). Anarchist Pietro Valpreda was sentenced to prison on charges of being responsible of Piazza Fontana bombing, in 1987 was acquitted by the supreme Court of Cassation for lack of evidence.

**4. transl.** – Luigi Calabresi was a police officer and Italian State Police official in Milan. He chose to enter the police over a career as an attorney and was sent to Milan, where he was assigned to investigate anarchists group, as a police commissioner. Three police officers interrogating anarchist Pinelli (member of the Milan-based anarchist association "Ponte della Ghisolfa" and responsible of the Italian branch of the Anarchist Black Cross) regarding the Piazza Fontana bombing, including Calabresi, were put under investigation in 1971 for his death, but legal proceeding concluded it was due to accidental causes. Calabresi was killed by two shots from a gun outside his home in 1972. In 2004 the Italian President awarded the gold medal for civil merit to the memory to commissioner, and the Pope Paul VI declared him "servant of God", martyr of justice.

**5. The birth of Grupo Primero de Mayo (First of May Group)** could be traced back at the 1st of May 1966, when they kidnapped the prelate Marco Ussia in Rome. It was a journalist who "baptised" the group in this way. The kidnapping was organized, with the support of some Italian anarchists, by the militants of FIJL [ed. – see following footnote] and CNT [ed. – see below], among them Octavio Alberola, one of the best minds of DI (Defesa Interior), a body that stems from the Iberian Liberating Movement (which united FAI, CNT and FIJL) to fight the Franco regime [ed. – see **Who Is It?**] with guns in their hands. After the dissolution of DI, caused from internal sabotage carried out by the faction of FAI and CNT "immobilists", the FIJL was left alone to fight. The First of May Group was one of the tools created by anarchism in order to continue the struggle. [ed. – "The CNT was a major force in Spain and Catalonia in the 1930s, with over a million members and a leading role in the war against fascism. During the Franco years, they played a major role in coordinating the resistance from exile, though according to many they had a moderating, stifling effect, owing to a conservative mentality and their legal status, exacerbated by pressure from the French authorities. Accordingly, most of the anarchist urban guerrillas who fought through those decades against Franco's police did so outside of the CNT. Nonetheless, the weight of their legacy made the CNT a major rallying point for the "insubmission" movement when the fascists cosmetically altered the state into a constitutional monarchy after Franco's death (and the assassination of his handpicked successor by the Basque group ETA). That movement, though it brought out hundreds of thousands in the streets in what appeared ready to become a revolution, failed, hindered according to some by the moderating effect of the behemoth CNT and according to nearly everyone by a terrorist arson occurring at a key point in the mobilizations, engineered by the military and blamed on the anarchists" (*Dreams, Demands & the Pragmatic Pitfall*.)]

**6. FIJL (Federacion Iberica de Juventudes Libertarias)** was established in 1932 as a youth anarchist organization, thousands of its militants took part in the Spanish civil war in 1936. During the following anti-Franco resistance it became the most vital component of Iberian anarchism.

**7. transl.** – Counter-investigation: the recourse of anarchist in technical matters of legal nature, that are setting aside the political identity of anarchy with purpose of creating a victimized image of an anarchist who is being persecuted for his ideals.

**8. ed.** – Revolutionary Internationalist Action Groups; French and Spanish anti-fascists.

**9. Anarchist Gianfranco Bertoli**, on the 17th of May 1973 (day of the first anniversary of the murder of police commissioner Calabresi, at the inauguration of a memorial plaque inside the yard of the Milanese police headquarters in Fatebenefratelli St.), threw a handgrenade at the main door of the police HQ, where, as Bertoli himself told, a cop kicked the bomb back resulting in the death of four people. His intentions were to hit the authorities present at the celebration in order to get revenge for Pinelli's death. He was sentenced with a life sentence and released on probation after 21 years of prison; his whole life he reaffirmed his being an individualist anarchist and the reasons of his gesture, denying the allegations of being a fascist manipulated by intelligence agencies, made by the magistrates and the media, and by a part of the same anarchist movement.

"When the attacks are seen as an individual duty, the task of every anarchist, we are all converted into militants or hypocrites. When all the aspects of our struggle are equally valued, the one who is not cut out for being a warrior need not boast or front a tough image. The partisans struggled as a community, and everyone had a role depending on their abilities. We must do the same. The acts of destruction must come from the collective body and go back to it. They should be formulated to restore the dignity of the whole body, not just that of the individual perpetrator or the brand name of the spectacular clandestine cell they belong to. They should be celebrated by the whole community, bringing everyone back to life." – Lev Zlodey & Jason Radegas

10. In Italy, before the Red Brigades [ed. – authoritarian Marxist-Leninist armed group], it was the anarchists who used the method of kidnapping as a mean of political pressure. At the 29th of September 1962 some young anarchists, in a quite improvised way, kidnapped in Milan the Spanish vice consul Isu Elias, to demand the commutation of the death penalty for their comrade of FIJL in Spain, who was destined to the garrote. The goal was achieved: the life of the young anarchist was saved. Then, at the 1st of May 1966, they kidnapped the Spanish councilor of the embassy in Rome, the prelate Marcos Ussia (see footnote 5).

11. Eiane Vincileone and Giovanni Corradini, editors of "Materialismo e Libertà" [transl. – Materialism & Freedom], published in 1963 as "a periodical of actions and libertarian studies" in just three issues. They both had contacts at international level, with FIJL and other militant anarchists. They were arrested for bombs in Fair Trade, the 25th of April, and released at the 7th of December 1969 due the lack of evidence. The couple had bonds of friendship with the publisher Giangiacomo Fertinelli, and their names will appear several times in the investigations and in the information files of that time. Vincileone was among the anarchists under arrest at the police HQ in Milan when Pinelli was murdered.

12. ed. – Notoriously authoritarian Marxist guerrilla leader, important in the Cuban revolution.

13. ed. – Named after 1879-1954 anarchist member of 'Workers of the Night' expropriators.

14. transl. – Pietro Valpreda frequented the "Bakunin Circle" in Rome, before founding with several friends the "22 March Circle". He was arrested following the December 12th 1969 Piazza Fontana bombing, and his name was splashed across the media as "the monster of Piazza Fontana". For three years he languished in jail awaiting trial. In 1972 he was released pending a trial, thanks to the so called "Valpreda law" introducing limitation to pretrial detention even in the case of very serious crimes. In order to achieve the release due to the parliamentary immunity, the "Manifesto" nominated Valpreda in parliament elections, but he did not reach the quorum. The Italian judiciary took 18 years to conclude that Valpreda was acquitted for lack of evidence. He died in 2002.

15. The Anarchist Black Cross was formed in Italy, Milan, in the first months of 1969, partly thanks to federated anarchist groups, in order to support the anarchist prisoners. One of the most important promoters of this initiative was Giuseppe Pinelli. The Italian branch published even a bulletin, of 9 issues from June 1969 till April 1971.

16. Federica Montseny (Madrid 1905 – Toulouse 1994) began her militant activity in CNT, alongside with her parents, Catalan anarchist, creators of "La Revista Blanca" in 1898. In 1936 she is present at the local committee of CNT and at the committee of the peninsula, of the Iberian

Anarchist Federation, participating in the drawing up of an anarcho-communist program. After the outburst of [the Spanish] revolution in the July of 1936, she is taking part in the struggle against the putschists of Francisco Franco. At the 4th of November 1936, she becomes one of the four ministers of CNT in the new government of Largo Caballero: Juan Garcia Oliver gets to the Ministry of Justice, Juan Peiro to the Ministry of Industry, Juan Lopez Sanchez to the Ministry of Commerce and Montseny to the Ministry of Health. At the end of revolution, she and her partner Germinal Esgleas were forced into exile in France, where she was arrested and released by the Vichy government, she managed to avoid her extradition to Spain, becoming one of the most important representatives of the CNT in exile, and of the "immobilist" component among the Iberian anarchists.

17. About that see Gianfranco Bertoli – by Alfredo Maria Bonanno, "Carteggio 1998-2000"

18. ed. – Named after Max, 1865–1944 anarchist historian and student of the Welsh language.

## THE WAR OVER MY LIFE

[ed. – By an anonymous Swedish comrade, included for its slightly more thoughtful treatment of attack and rebellion in the course of one's life.]

*The battery feels cold against my fingertips. I stop grubbing about in the desk drawer. Slowly the filter of the cigarette pastes itself onto my lips. The thread of steel wool from the workshop is diligently prepared with the eyes and the fit for the battery. Solemnly I construct the smouldering gear. First at the positive pole. Important that the smouldering point, the eye, is proper. And so the other end follows at the negative pole. The smouldering appears quickly. Hurriedly the tobacco filled mouth of the cigarette meets the glowing eye. Puff. Puff. The cigarette is lit. The smell of burned metal, battery acid and tobacco smoke. It is past lockup. I'm really not the smoker type, I'm doing the snuff but then again the forbidden smoking ritual... A heretic ritual. A spit in the face of the correctional institution... a manifestation of a fervent need within me, to refuse that uniform which they are trying to impose on me. It raises the quality of life...*



I light a cigarette that I sloppily rolled myself. I stand in front of the house where I live in an European metropole. A catholic church faces me in defiance from the opposite side of the street. The cigarette no longer raises the quality of my life, it is now as much a part of my everyday life as was the strip-searches in prison.

I can never speak for anyone else without committing a most horrific crime to myself, I can always only speak from my own experiences, my contradicting interests and desires.

**The prison that I was defying when I was lighting a cigarette with a battery and a piece of steel wool, is the same prison that I defy when I today choose to act for myself, for my liberation and to be able to live together with other free individuals. This is not a prison with a given name or a specific place to find for confrontation. It is a prison that I see us all living in.**

The shapes it takes are so many and its guises are so different but what they all have in common is that they are substantialized as soon as you try to approach the spontaneous, the wordless, the immediate, the unmediated – that, which is your life. There are many different names for this prison – shame, justification, obligation, duty, obedience – that all are deriving from the same source, which is, **to be ruled by someone else's interests**.

The prison walls most simple to aim ones arsenal at, are of course the ones right in front of us. Whether it be a local cop station, a company or one of the state institutions that so innocently, through hard paper work, administrate our life circumstances.

But what then is a demolished wall when you later finance its reconstruction with the taxes you pay from the work that has been more or less imposed on you? When, after all, there is yet another wall and yet another still... behind the first one?

Attack is a splendid act but is so easily institutionalized into becoming yet another unreflected part of ones administrated everyday life's constitution. The attack is indeed an act of self-defense when it is aimed from a slave to a ruler but how long are we gonna act like slaves, how long are we gonna defend ourselves? How long are

we gonna let our ideas – our passions and wills – give in to the fear of *really* becoming a threat to the ruling interests? When do we quit our roles as submitted and start acting with the self-confidence of one who lacks masters? When do we stop believing in change and start to destroy the foundation of this prison, that surrounds us all from first breath to the last?

We can only be ruled so far as we allow ourselves to be. It might sound cynical but it is at the same time a statement hard to disarm. Ultimately: the one who rather chooses to die than to bow before a master, is in no way better or worse than any other individual – disgusting moralist values don't belong here – but what we can say is that it dies as itself. It chooses to die of and for itself, for its will to live completely in accordance to its own passions, needs and desires. It chooses to die rather than to serve someone else's interests.

Most people continue, however, barely living, to kill themselves for someone else's interests. Few are of course the ones who *wish* to die but, confronted with the possibility to really live, will they dare to take the chance?

**What does it really mean to live in constant hostility with the existent, with the state, with the interests that tries to rule me? Put aside the rather exciting taste it gives as the words roll out of the mouth, it is of course something that receives a new answer every time a comrade asks herself [sic] that question.**

For me, this means to never become comfortable in the circumstances that the rulers create for us – circumstances they create in an illusory exchange for our submission. I enjoy life as much as I can but I never sink so far into the sofa that I can't get up again.

This means that my everyday life does not only consist of pure survival, or to "take care of myself" according to the latest fashion, or to achieve something that does not correspond with my passions, dreams, needs and wishes, may they be social or societal expectations or obligations.

For me this means a *constant conflictuality* with my current existence, which is to say, with the interests that try to rule my life. This means the active search for the materialization of my anti-authoritarian rage and opportunities for confrontation with all the structures that maintain this society.

This means to *never compromise* with these structures. To never fall for the promises of change, accommodation, negotiation or improvement. For my basic survival I do of course need to make practical compromises but to confuse them with the place that my

heart's desires has, that my passions and ideas has, is just one big self-delusion. To confuse them means in this case to hand over my arms to the State, in one self-loathing weapons amnesty. To hang up my boots and be pleased with the existence this society offers me. This means to not feed myself with the lie that I can live a life on my own terms within this society.

To *never compromise* means to never stop fighting as long as my freedom and my life is being restricted and ruled by someone else.

*The gate opens slowly. The sun makes me peer. On the parking lot the hacks' cars are reflecting the sun in their shiny paint. The air above the asphalt is rippling. It smells of freshly mowed lawn and elder. My clothes are so last autumn's fashion and way too warm. The sweat is pushing through my eyelids. They say that if you turn around, you will come back. I turn around in defiance, smile and reach out a long finger. I think a bit about the time that has passed. A tear appears in my eye but soon disappears into the sweat. The smile expands. I turn back again, let go of what I have in my hands and cartwheel over the baking-hot asphalt. Soon my ride arrives with loud music through the rolled-down windows...*

Constantly enriched of experiences in the struggle against the existent, from one prison to another, I throw myself with a fighting spirit in to the war over my life!



"If we take a look back at our normality, we see that direct violence from the State and its institutions is not the most freedom-killing one, but rather carries with it a catalytic potential for revolt. No, the worst of all, and what could make the most freedom-committed of individuals rot away in a concrete landscape, is the bureaucratically administrated power: the Job Centre, the Tax office, the Social Insurance Authority, the Social Security Administration, the Migration Authority, the Prison Institution, the Juvenile Office, the Bailiffs and all of their capitalist collaborators (career coaching firms, asylum entrepreneurs, debt collectors, "child entrepreneurs", etc.). Together with the morals enforced by society, telling us how to act and what our obligations are as slaves; religious and patriarchal structures in families and local communities... You should want to work, but no one wants to hire you. You get a job, but you're not paid any money. You are promised asylum, but in the end you still have to go underground. You are supposed to be eager to learn, but your intelligence is defamed. It should come as no surprise that, because of all this, a hatred towards the existent is formulated, and conscious steps are taken to attack it. Rather it is worrying that so many keep submitting to these social relations."

– *Concerning the Rågsved Riots*



## 'FORM DEFINES CONTENT'

[ed. – From a 2008 letter from anarchist then-prisoner Eric McDavid who walked away from a career to peruse ecological direct action (see *Return Fire* vol.1 pg70); in January 2015, after serving 9 years, he was released.]

To those familiar with debates, it's known that when one side establishes the terms to be used, it's only a matter of time before they've won the match – the other views have conceded to that particular frame of reference/mind-set which leads to a particular outcome. **i found it curious (to say the least) that so many adhered to the given definition of freedom shoved in front of them.** What is your definition of freedom at this moment? How are you to share it with others without it being explored by & for yourself? Whose definitions do you wish to utilize in perceiving your reality? When that is given up, what occurs? Within this constellation, what are the benefits of exploration? & the repercussion of leaving it obscured?

*[Sorry, this following bit of constructive criticism may be hard for some to digest]*

Another aspect of this undoing feels like it's been manifesting itself for some time by the way the (anarchist/radical) community *[sic]* has been/is received by the larger communities *[sic]* with which it comes into contact & interacts (please forgive the generalizations). The folks who have lived within those communities for generations have seen time & again how “energetic youth” (be it from schools, churches, radical groups, etc.) come in to make a change – perhaps gaining some window dressings here & there; but soon most end up leaving & making way for another up & coming generation of exuberance. The majority of those who leave go on to some form of schooling in order to “use the system for good.” So many, falling back on to careers after they've earned their credentials as activists.

Here, society at large, smiling a sigh of relief & giving a knowing nod, no longer sees them as lost children; having got it out of their system: they've grown up & accepted the responsibility to be truly effective in the world (please re-read that; **how many rationalize their choices/actions by adhering to those loaded terms and concepts, consciously or not**). ‘Form defines content’ is a hard lesson to learn, and regardless of the intent that initiates a career, a change of priorities is inevitable: concessions are made. Through this a distance is maintained (activist vs. ‘those in need’) – fortified by a colonialist based behavior *[ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg67]* that has nurtured a divide & conquer loop-hole which only we can close. The safety net which rides along in the back pocket of the privileged becomes a web that bears its own poison.

## And where do the costs arise?

No matter what choices we make, we're always allowed back into the fold. The deeper the deviation, the trespass: the higher the toll for return. Actually at that point, the cost is irrelevant (made stark by some of the G.S. [*'Green Scare'*; see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg83] cases) because all that matters is the return to comfort: that familiar (given level of) freedom. And who couldn't relate to the choices made? We've been shown repeatedly the outcome: “it's only natural.”

From my perspective the type of Death we're Dancing with here is the fear of letting go – letting go of what we've been taught (programmed) defines us – that which we are to hold most sacred.

What are the definitions which define your reality? What choices do they open before you? And which are closed? What unfolds because of those choices?

Basically: How do you wish to Live your Life?

## The Tyranny of the Clock

[ed. – By George Woodcock; first published in 'War Commentary: For Anarchism', March 1944]

In no characteristic is existing society in the West so sharply distinguished from the earlier societies, whether of Europe or the East, than in its conception of time. To the ancient Chinese or Greek, to the Arab herdsman or Mexican peon of today, time is represented in the cyclic processes of nature, the alternation of day and night, the passage from season to season. **The nomads and farmers measured and still measure their day from sunrise to sunset, and their year in terms of the seedtime and harvest, of the falling leaf and the ice thawing on the lakes and rivers.** The farmer worked according to the

elements, the craftsman for so long as he felt it necessary to perfect his product. Time was seen in a process of natural change, and men *[sic]* were not concerned in its exact measurement. For this reason civilisations highly developed in other respects had the most primitive means of measuring time, the hour glass with its trickling sand or dripping water, the sundial, useless on a dull day, and the candle or lamp whose unburnt remnant of oil or wax indicated the hours. All these devices were approximate and inexact, and were often rendered unreliable by the weather or the personal laziness of the tender. Nowhere in the ancient or medieval world were more than a tiny minority of men concerned with time in the terms of mathematical exactitude.

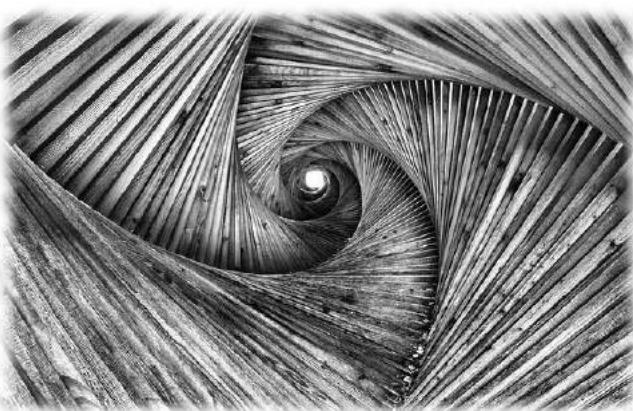
Modern, Western man, however lives in a world which runs according to the

mechanical and mathematical symbols of clock time. The clock dictates his movements and inhibits his actions. The clock turns time from a process of nature into a commodity that can be measured and bought and sold like soap or sultanas. And because, without some means of exact time keeping, industrial capitalism could never

have developed and could not continue to exploit the workers, the clock represents an element of mechanical tyranny in the lives of modern men more potent than any individual exploiter or any other machine. It is valuable to trace the historical process by which the clock influenced the social development of modern European civilisation.

**It is a frequent circumstance of history that a culture or civilisation develops the device which will later be used for its destruction.** The ancient Chinese, for example, invented gunpowder, which was developed by the military experts of the West and eventually led to the Chinese civilisation itself being destroyed by the high explosives of modern warfare. Similarly, the supreme achievement of the ingenuity of the craftsmen in the medieval cities of Europe was the invention of the mechanical clock, which, with its revolutionary alteration of the concept of time, materially assisted the growth of exploiting capitalism and the destruction of medieval culture.

There is a tradition that the clock appeared in the eleventh century, as a device for ringing bells at regular intervals in the monasteries which, with the regimented life they imposed on their inmates, were the closest social approximation in the middle ages to the factory of today. The first authenticated clock, however, appeared in the thirteenth century, and it was not until the fourteenth century that clocks became



common ornaments of the public buildings in the German cities.

These early clocks, operated by weights, were not particularly accurate, and it was not until the sixteenth century that any great reliability was obtained. In England, for instance the clock at Hampton Court, made in 1540, is said to have been the first accurate clock in the country. And even the accuracy of the sixteenth century clocks are relative, for they were only equipped with hour hands. The idea of measuring time in minutes and seconds had been thought out by the early mathematicians as far back as the fourteenth century, but it was not until the invention of the pendulum in 1657 that sufficient accuracy was attained to permit the addition of a minute hand, and the second hand did not appear until the eighteenth century. **These two centuries, it should be observed, were those in which capitalism grew to such an extent that it was able to take advantage of the industrial revolution in technique in order to establish its domination over society.**

The clock, as Lewis Mumford has pointed out, represents the key machine of the machine age, both for its influence on technology and its influence on the habits of men. Technically, the clock was the first really automatic machine that attained any importance in the life of men. Previous to its invention, the common machines were of such a nature that their operation depended on some external and unreliable force, such as human or animal muscles, water or wind. It is true that the Greeks had invented a number of primitive automatic machines, but these were used, like Hero's steam engine, for obtaining 'supernatural' effects in the temples or for amusing the tyrants of Levantine cities. But the clock was the first automatic machine that attained a public importance and a social function. Clock-making became the industry from which men learnt the elements of machine making and gained the technical skill that was to produce the complicated machinery of the industrial revolution.

Socially the clock had a more radical influence than any other machine, in that it was the means by which the regularisation and regimentation of life necessary for an exploiting system of industry could best be attained. The clock provided the means by which time – a category so elusive that no philosophy has yet determined its nature – could be measured concretely in more tangible forms of space provided by the circumference of a clock dial. Time as duration became disregarded, and men began to talk and think always of 'lengths' of time, just as if they were talking of lengths of calico. And time, being now measurable in mathematical symbols, became regarded as a commodity that could be bought and sold in the same way as any other commodity.

The new capitalists, in particular, became rabidly time-conscious. Time, here symbolising the labour of workers, was regarded by them almost as if it were the chief raw material of industry. **'Time is money' became one of the key slogans of capitalist ideology**, and the timekeeper was the most significant of the new types of official introduced by the capitalist dispensation.

In the early factories the employers went so far as to manipulate their clocks or sound their factory whistles at the wrong times in order to defraud their workers a little of this valuable new commodity. Later such practices became less frequent, but the influence of the clock imposed a regularity on the lives of the majority of men which had previously been known only in the monastery. Men actually became like clocks, acting with a repetitive regularity which had no resemblance to the rhythmic life of a natural being. They became, as the Victorian phrase put it, 'as regular as clockwork'. Only in the country districts where the natural lives of animals and plants and the elements still dominated life, did any large proportion of the population fail to succumb to the deadly tick of monotony.

At first this new attitude to time, this new regularity of life, was imposed by the clock-owning masters on the unwilling poor. The factory slave reacted in his spare time by living with a chaotic irregularity which characterised the gin-sodden slums of early nineteenth century industrialism. Men fled to the timeless world of drink or Methodist inspiration. But gradually the idea of regularity spread downwards among the workers. **Nineteenth century religion and morality played their part by proclaiming the sin of 'wasting time'.** The introduction of mass-produced watches and clocks in the 1850's spread time-consciousness among those who had previously merely reacted to the stimulus of the knocker-up or the factory whistle. In the church and in the school, in the office and the workshop, punctuality was held up as the greatest of the virtues.

Out of this slavish dependence on mechanical time which spread insidiously into every class in the nineteenth century there grew up the demoralising regimentation of life which characterises factory work today. The man who fails to conform faces social disapproval and economic ruin. If he is late at the factory the worker will lose his job or even, at the present day [1944 – while wartime regulations were in force], find himself in prison. **Hurried meals, the regular morning and evening scramble for trains or buses,**

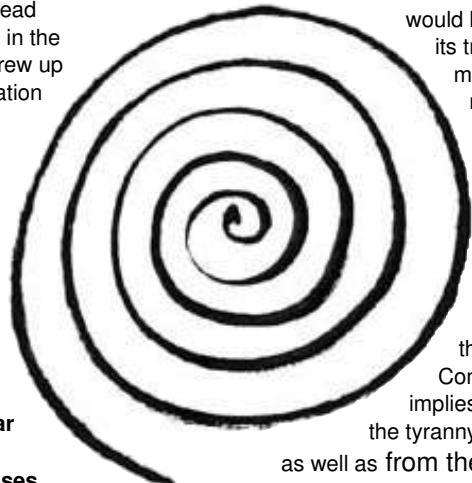
**the strain of having to work to time schedules, all contribute to digestive and nervous disorders, to ruin health and shorten life.**

Nor does the financial imposition of regularity tend, in the long run, to greater efficiency. Indeed, the quality of the product is usually much poorer, because the employer, regarding time as a commodity which he has to pay for, forces the operative to maintain such a speed that his work must necessarily be skimped. Quantity rather than quality becomes the criterion, the enjoyment is taken out of work itself, and the worker in his turn becomes a 'clock-watcher', **concerned only when he will be able to escape to the scanty and monotonous leisure of industrial society**, in which he 'kills time' by cramming in as much time-scheduled and mechanised enjoyment of cinema, radio and newspapers as his wage packet and his tiredness allow. Only if he is willing to accept of the hazards of living by his faith or his wits can the man without money avoid living as a slave to the clock.

The problem of the clock is, in general, similar to that of the machine. Mechanical time is valuable as a means of co-ordination of activities in a highly developed society, just as the machine is valuable as a means of reducing unnecessary labour to the minimum. Both are valuable for the contribution they make to the smooth running of society, and should be used insofar as they assist men to co-operate efficiently and to eliminate monotonous toil and social confusion. But neither should be allowed to dominate mens lives as they do today.

Now the movement of the clock sets the tempo men's lives - they become the servant of the concept of time which they themselves have made, **and are held in fear, like Frankenstein by his own monster.** In a sane and free society such an arbitrary domination of man's functions by either clock or machine would obviously be out of the question. The domination of man by the creation of man is even more ridiculous than the domination of man by man. Mechanical time

would be relegated to its true function of a means of reference and co-ordination, and men would return again to a balance view of life no longer dominated by the worship of the clock. Complete liberty implies freedom from the tyranny of abstractions as well as from the rule of men.



# PIRATES VS. CORSAIRS!

[ed. – Privateers (French ones of the Breton port of St. Malo being the first known as corsairs), while using similar methods to pirates, were licensed by a State, such as the notorious Sir Francis Drake of the British Empire or the Barbary Corsairs of the Ottoman Empire; in comparison to the general historical view (rightly or wrongly) of pirates of that era as being lawless, cross-racial and anti-hierarchical.]



*“I will defend France, its vital interests, its image, its message. And I make this commitment before you: I will defend Europe, the community of destinies that gave itself upon the people of this continent. Its our civilization that is at stake. Our way of being free.”*

– Emmanuel Macron, 2017 inauguration speech as French President

France is one of the European countries that is most interested in the trade of natural gas imported to Europe, because they will be one of the biggest distributors, and also because France is one of the strongest countries in the European Union and NATO. France's new presidential speech lets us foresee an iron freedom. “Our way of being free” never was, and still isn't, in relation to other people outside the “community of destinies” free from moral, ethical and technological superiority. We constructed our civilization in ways that depend on energy sources, which are transforming this world environmentally and socially. **The main global energy source pushed to the 21st Century is non-conventional natural gas, and Europe is betting high in its energetic independence.** On a environmental level the debate is everywhere. What about the social level? The ocean bed will be the future depository of natural resources to be explored on a large scale by multinationals, from energy sources to minerals like lithium or copper, and organisms for biotech [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg31*]. Europe is prepared. What about the “others”?

**In 2016 NATO stated that the Operation “Ocean Shield” was completed with success. Initiated in 2008, the objective of the operation was to protect shipping from pirates in the Western Indian Ocean, off the Somalian coast<sup>[1]</sup>. But...**

This May 11th super methane vessel La Mancha Knutsen, transporting LNG [*Liquid Natural Gas*] for Fenosa Natural Gas, of Spain, was attacked by pirates in the Guinean Gulf, south from Nigeria.

According to the maritime website Maritime Herald, the methane vessel was harried by another boat with at least seven armed men on board. After the alarm sounded, the vessel's captain had to take evasive maneuvers to stop pirates boarding. The pirates shot against the vessel's tower, but in the end gave up and went back to the land without hurting anybody or causing material damage. Unlike how companies are used to working nowadays, this vessel didn't carry any security guards.

La Mancha Knutsen left Aliaga's harbour, in Turkey. The ship belongs to the consortium Trygve Seglkem and to NYK, and has been constructed by Hyundai Heavy Industries in South Korea.

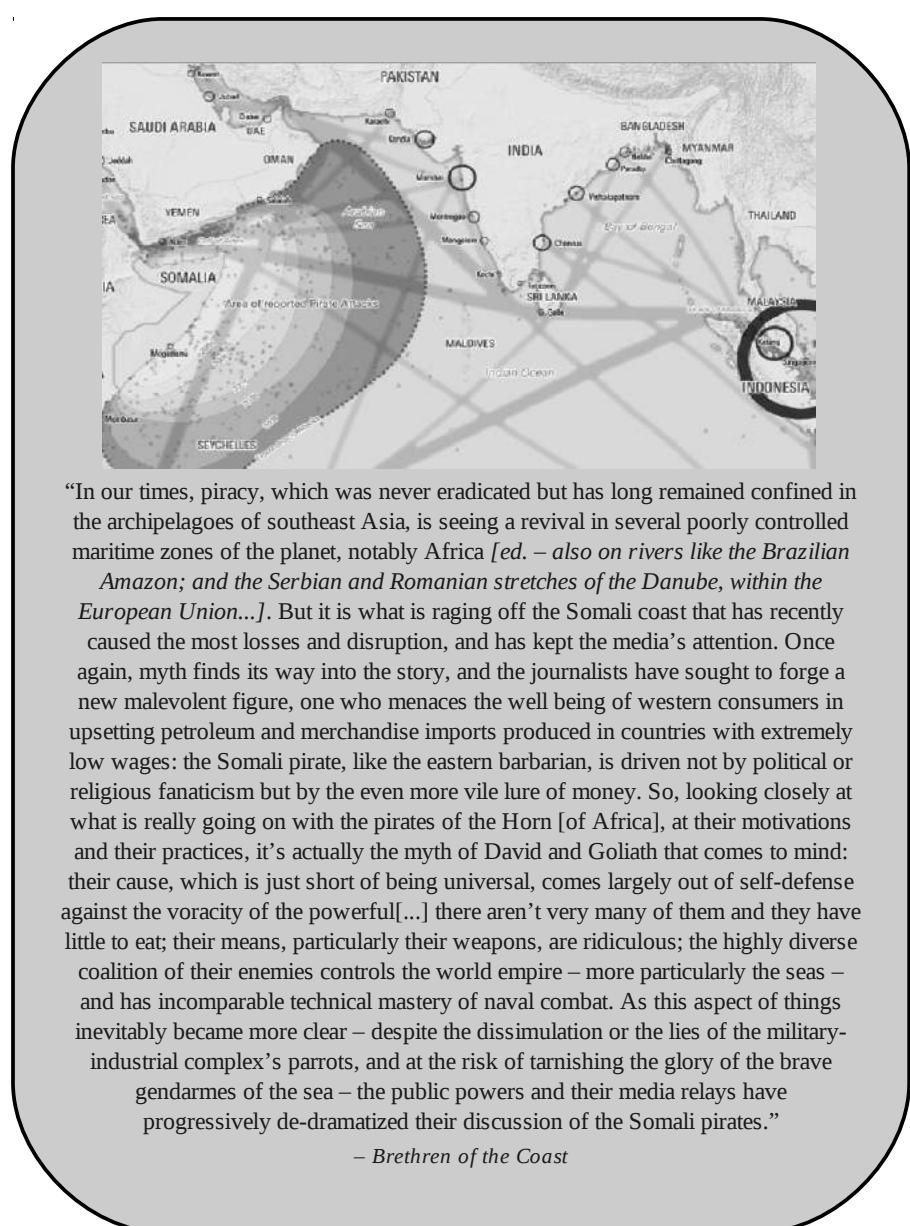
Turkey, that has been brought to the world's eyes for the worst reasons [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg97*], may became a member of the European Union.

According to a European Parliament report of 2014: “while US has an abundant supply of cheap gas from the “Shale Revolution” [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg14*], the EU remains dependent on gas imports.

*Ukraine's crisis raised concerns around the security of Europe's gas supply<sup>[2]</sup>.*

*Europe is well connected to its main suppliers through a network of pipelines, but there are plans for new pipelines to transport gas from the Caspian Region [ed. – see *Return Fire vol.2 pg83*], and later perhaps from Iraq and Iran crossing Turkey and Italy.”*

These plans are an alternative for the gas supply from Russia to Europe, that saw its construction of a new pipeline that would connect the Balkans and Austria denied for disrespecting European Union's trade rules.



“In our times, piracy, which was never eradicated but has long remained confined in the archipelagos of southeast Asia, is seeing a revival in several poorly controlled maritime zones of the planet, notably Africa [ed. – also on rivers like the Brazilian

*Amazon; and the Serbian and Romanian stretches of the Danube, within the European Union...]. But it is what is raging off the Somali coast that has recently caused the most losses and disruption, and has kept the media's attention. Once again, myth finds its way into the story, and the journalists have sought to forge a new malevolent figure, one who menaces the well being of western consumers in upsetting petroleum and merchandise imports produced in countries with extremely low wages: the Somali pirate, like the eastern barbarian, is driven not by political or religious fanaticism but by the even more vile lure of money. So, looking closely at what is really going on with the pirates of the Horn [of Africa], at their motivations and their practices, it's actually the myth of David and Goliath that comes to mind: their cause, which is just short of being universal, comes largely out of self-defense against the voracity of the powerful [...] there aren't very many of them and they have little to eat; their means, particularly their weapons, are ridiculous; the highly diverse coalition of their enemies controls the world empire – more particularly the seas – and has incomparable technical mastery of naval combat. As this aspect of things inevitably became more clear – despite the dissimulation or the lies of the military-industrial complex's parrots, and at the risk of tarnishing the glory of the brave*

*gendarmes of the sea – the public powers and their media relays have progressively de-dramatized their discussion of the Somali pirates.”*

– *Brethren of the Coast*

"If Turkey's membership fails, this will due to the Turkish, not European, lack of will to apply to European standards."  
 (Jean-Claude Juncker, President of European Commission, to German newspaper Bild).

The methane vessel will be the first of four LNG Knutsen boats that will deliver natural gas, where the vast majority is fracked gas to Spain<sup>[3]</sup>, coming from the LNG Sanine Pass of Cheniere Energy, Louisiana, USA. The delivery is one of hundreds expected to happen starting in August of this year as part of a contract of 20 years. According to the website [thefreeinline.wordpress](http://thefreeinline.wordpress), some shipments arrived before the period stipulated by La Mancha Knutsen. The contract to import natural gas from the company Fenosa Natural Gas from the USA is similar to Energias de Portugal's contract.



**Civilization and Europe's heart have been attacked by pirates, terrorists and refugees. The pirates and terrorists are the ones that couldn't seek refuge; they are all hostage of a global system that feeds civil wars at their homelands, using them as human resources there or in another place in the world.** The pirates, former fishermen, saw the sea become the dump of the Western garbage, toxic garbage that killed all fish that used to feed them<sup>[4]</sup>. Forced by hunger or many other times by armed paramilitary groups with Western technology, they started to work in exchange for a reward of the ship's goods. On the ships, pirates and the ship's crew fight against each other but they have the same goal: survive and go back to their homes. Deciding what will be the destiny of both (depending on the ship's cargo interest) are the Masters, emperors and their heirs (i.e. Capital); the pirates' and crew's destiny was mixed, but the destiny of the corsairs working for the empires was exactly like they teach in school: Fraternity; Equality; Liberty! [ed. – 'enlightened' watchwords of the French Revolution that brought the bourgeoisie to power; see 'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'] (i.e. Globalization).

1. ed. – "Ever since Somali dictator Siad Barre was toppled in 1991, the country has been in a civil war. The 'Transitional Federal Government' that is in place controls merely a few blocks in the capital Mogadishu. The absence of a real government has

been exploited by the rest of the world. Fishing trawlers from Europe, North America and Asia have been helping themselves to the huge fishing grounds off the 3,300 kilometre coast of Somalia. In its peak, this IUU trade (Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated) in Somalia generated some US\$300 million annually for the first world [sic], according to calculations by the UN. This is a world-wide problem, and the UN estimates that about one in five fish consumed worldwide is fished illegally. The pirates come in large fishing trawlers from rich countries (who have long ago depleted their own fishing grounds), registered under flags of convenience of countries who never signed any agreements on fishery quota. The depletion of what was once described as 'a rainforest of fish' soon removed the livelihood of the coastal population of Somalia[...] The industrialised countries also discovered another use of the Somali waters: as a giant waste dump. Ever since the London Convention of 1993 banned the dumping of waste on sea, industrialised countries have been looking for a way out. Greenpeace reports of ships cruising the oceans for years, trying to find a 'suitable' place to dispose of their cargo. While the disposal of a tonne of toxic chemical waste in Europe costs more than €200, dumping the shit in Somali waters costs as little as €2, so the economic incentive is obvious. For radioactive waste the ratio is even steeper. Organised with the help of the Italian Mafia, pretty much every European country got rid of their unwanted waste this way for years. Other countries, like Australia joined in. The extent of this scheme was literally uncovered during the tsunami of 2004, when hundreds of rusted barrels were washed up along the coast of Somalia, poisoning many people. [...] With little fish to catch, some of the out-of-work fishermen decided to take matters into their own hands and started their own 'coast guard' operations. They stopped foreign fishing vessels and demanded money from their owners to compensate for the fish they had taken. As the new Somali coast guard became successful, others copied the business model. Regular trade vessels were hijacked and ransom was demanded. According to reports by Reuters from December 2009, a stock exchange system has been set up in Haradheere. A former pirate at the time said: '[Four months ago] we decided to set up this stock exchange. We started with 15 "maritime companies" and now we are hosting 72. Ten of them have so far been successful at hijacking. The shares are open to all and everybody can take part, whether personally at sea or on land by providing cash, weapons or useful materials... we've made piracy a community activity.' [...] No warships ever stopped the poachers or the ships with poisonous waste. Instead, Somalia was declared a 'failed state' and simply written off. Only once the Somali population started defending themselves, did the rest of the world react. As soon as 'free trade' was threatened, the rich countries decided to gang up and deploy warships [ed. – remaining fishers have been shot and killed by Italian and Russian naval guards under suspicion of being pirates, and in 2012 European Union troops were authorised to fire on 'pirate positions' on land; see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg35]. The Horn of Africa is one of the world's busiest shipping routes — more than

20,000 ships pass there annually. The industrialised world simply cannot allow the population of a country without a real government to have any form of control over the shipping routes. [...] There is more to be poached from Somalia than just fish. Large oil and gas reserves, as well as iron ore and aluminium are suspected, and exploitation of a uranium mine is under way. [These are the reasons] why every country wants to be involved in the 'battle against piracy'" (*'Pirates' vs Pirates: Somalia Through the Eyes of a German Court*).

2. ed. – Europe's main gas supplies from Russia run through Ukraine. An uprising in 2014 against the then-President comprised nationalist/fascist factions, those wanting to join the European Union, anarchists, supporters of the Russian colonial powers of the country, elite factions and many others (during weeks of bloody combat, in Kiev alone at least 88 people were killed within the span of 48 hours, many shot by snipers on the roofs of government buildings), ending with Russia annexing the Crimean Peninsula and battling Ukrainian troops, and neo-liberalists in power in Kiev. From 'The Ukrainian Revolution & the Future of Social Movements': "The events in Ukraine must be understood as part of the same global trajectory of revolt as the Arab Spring, the plaza occupations in Spain, Occupy, and the Gezi uprising in Turkey. This is not good news. In each of the previous examples, initial police repression caused a single-issue protest to metastasize into a generalized uprising, transforming a square in the heart of the capital into a fiercely defended urban autonomous zone. This seemed to offer a new political model, in which people cohere around tactics rather than parties or ideologies. (It is telling indeed that Occupy was named for a tactic rather than a goal.) All these revolts could be broadly interpreted as reactions to the consequences of capitalism, though anti-austerity proved too narrow a frame: Turkey and Brazil saw protests over the effects of ascendant economies, not recessions. [...] A few years ago, it was possible to hope that the coming insurrections would be a naturally fertile ground for anarchist resistance. Now it is clear that, although anarchists can find new affinities within them, nationalists can capitalize upon them just as easily. This may be an inherent problem with movements that cohere around tactics, and it poses serious strategic questions to anarchists. [...] What had been a purely symbolic conflict over space with Occupy became full-on paramilitary urban warfare in Ukraine. By taking the front lines in confronting the authorities, nationalists and fascists have won themselves legitimacy as "defenders of the people" that will serve them for many years to come. Surely fascists around the world have been watching, and will be emboldened to try the same thing elsewhere when the opportunity arises. Fascists, too, are plugged into a global imaginary; we ignore this at our peril. [...] Identifying ourselves, via word or deed, merely as antagonists is not clear enough when we are not the only antagonists of the ruling powers. Our opposition to all hierarchy and domination must be communicated in everything we say and do; otherwise, we risk bolstering a reactionary opposition."

3. It's not known yet where the natural gas delivery will take place. Barcelona's refinery is the more likely to be chosen due to its large storage capacity. But this is only one of the seven refineries adapted to treat and distribute gas in Spain.

4. ed. – "The fishing industry is the clearest example [of actual luddite wars in the 'third world']. Those using older boats and nets and maintaining the ecology of their areas over centuries have sometimes been forced to literally ambush and burn the mechanized trawlers brought in by modern industries and states to 'improve productivity'. This particular war has taken place all over Asia's shorelines, till governments have been forced to demarcate areas for the operations of the two different sciences" (Western Science and Violence).



# FRAUD, FANTASY, & FICTION IN ENVIRONMENTAL WRITING / 'THE INVENTION OF THE TRIBE' / Q

## Fraud, Fantasy & Fiction in Environmental Writing

### **Introduction: Environmental 'Frauds'**

Over the past century, there have been several enthusiastically embraced accounts of environmental lore that have eventually been recognized as less than entirely authentic. Among the most well known and less obviously concocted of these is the case of 'Chief Seattle's speech' – a homily of ecological wisdom that turned out to have been written not by the chief of the Suquamish himself, but rather by Ted Perry, a white University professor, loosely based on what Seattle had been reported as saying.<sup>[1]</sup> A second case concerns the writings of 'Grey Owl', who claimed to have been born to an Apache chief and a Scottish woman, and whose books about his life in the Canadian wilderness enjoyed wide popularity in the 1930's. He was later revealed as Archie Belaney, who was born in Hastings on the south coast of England and later adopted his chosen identity after emigrating to Canada. While these writings have often simply been dismissed as fraudulent, their enormous popularity suggests that they tapped into a deep-seated need among Euroamerican readers, and that this might usefully be regarded as symptomatic of something that is denied in industrial society. **If a symptom can be regarded both as the expression of a repressed need and as an attempt to compensate for it, what is it that is repressed in the modern world, and how might it be authentically expressed?** In order to explore these issues, I begin with a lengthy detour into the character of truth in modern society.

### **Truth, Correctness, & Identity**

A truthful statement is commonly understood either as one that *accurately refers to some transcendent property of the outside world* or as one that *is consistent with some consensual system of thought such as logic*; or as some combination of these. As modern humanity distances itself from the natural order and encloses itself within a technologically created realm, the emphasis is shifting from the first of these criteria to the second. Increasingly, truth is defined in terms of that subset of the real that is



scientifically plausible, politically acceptable, and economically exploitable; and as the world is physically reconstructed through the application of technology, so the first criterion of truth seems to fade. For example, the statement that nature is 'a human creation' expresses the growing skepticism in the industrialized world that there is anything genuinely 'other', anything outside and beyond human action and human reason; and as technological rationality colonizes the world ideologically and physically, so such statements – which would have been viewed as absurd even 50 years ago – become increasingly accurate descriptions of the way the world is. Thus the notion of truth as founded in the character of a natural reality that is greater than the form it might take within any particular cultural system or era is giving way to the idea of truth as reflecting the principles of one specific, technologically transformed world. This reflects a widespread but tacit acceptance of the 'end of ideology' hypothesis, implying that the sort of world we live in today is the *only possible world*. Given this 'idolatry of the actual', ecologically sound lifestyles tend to be viewed as unrealistic, childish fantasies or as harmless aberrations. And while intelligent, communicating, nonhuman creatures are common in children's stories and Hollywood science fiction, we are expected to leave them behind when we close the book or leave the cinema, returning to a 'real' world that is increasingly bereft of such qualities.

This shrinkage of the real toward a reified present leads to the view that qualities that are inexpressible in scientific terms<sup>[2]</sup> are

invalid or nonexistent. **To say that a particular area of forest is populated by certain species or is rich in certain chemical elements, for example, may be correct; but it is a very impoverished expression of what the forest *is* in its entirety.** While the first version of truth aspires to express this entirety ([Martin] Heidegger's *aletheia*, or 'unconcealment'), the second version, 'correctness', merely maps it onto a particular system of understanding, and then in turn, re-imposes this understanding *onto* the world. If we insist on the reality of those qualities that tend to be ignored by merely 'correct' descriptions, then we are forced to look for means of expressing them other than the forms of science that have been conscripted into the cause of industrial growth. There are clear implications here for the sort of world that results from our behavior, given our enormous technological power; for qualities unrecognizable by such sciences tend to have a limited life expectancy. Spirits and gods once seemed real; and today not only ecosystems, but the *idea* of the ecosystem may be in danger of following them into oblivion.

There are implications, too, for our identities as human beings. If the world seems entirely rationally understandable, then feeling, spirit, and emotion become 'irrational' and therefore suspect. Of course, not all experience can be directly taken as a valid guide to what is true or moral; and it is one of the tasks of a sophisticated culture to interpret and articulate experience appropriately. A firm sense of identity needs to be *grounded* in a world that is experienced as complementing our senses, faculties, and indwelling expectations; and this experience motivates our intuition of the first version of truth, which grows out of our embodied resonance with those aspects of the natural world that we have interacted with in the course of our evolutionary history. Since we evolved as multi-sensory creatures, it is reasonable to assume that all our senses and faculties have a part to play in forming our identities. What David Levin refers to as "*the body's primordial and archaic attunement[...] its implicit structures of pre-understanding [of] what is basically good, basically true, and basically beautiful*"<sup>[3]</sup> provides our fundamental moral and epistemological orientation. This first version of truth accepts that although the senses, along with intuition, feeling, and instinct, provide us with meanings that may be difficult to articulate, they nevertheless enable us to reach out to insights and

"In his 1936 essay *The Storyteller*, Walter Benjamin focuses on the transition from oral storytelling to the production of written novels. He writes: "The earliest symptom of a process whose end is the decline of storytelling is the rise of the novel at the beginning of modern times. What distinguishes the novel from the story [is] its essential dependence on the book. The dissemination of the novel became possible only with the invention of printing. What can be handed on orally, the wealth of the epic, is of a different kind from what constitutes the stock in trade of the novel. What differentiates the novel from all other forms of prose literature [is] that it neither comes from oral tradition nor goes into it. This distinguishes it from storytelling in particular. The storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale." Two things happen here: first, the power retained in the act of storytelling is curtailed. To Walter Benjamin, storytelling is a unique skill that facilitates "the ability to exchange experiences" both between individuals and inter-generationally. By extension, storytelling provides what he calls "counsel", described as "less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story". If wisdom is, as Benjamin writes, "counsel woven into the fabric of real life," then storytelling is the practice by which particular social groups remain autonomously in control of their own personal narratives and realities. The novel diverts this process, mediating self-determined storytelling and reflecting a more generalized modern logos. Secondly, the skill of storytelling falls out of practice, and the experiences of diverse peoples and generations are lost, thus breaking the continuity of group-specific narratives. While the novel crystallizes the malleability of oral storytelling, the rise of the information age goes one step beyond anything resembling a story, claiming "prompt verifiability", a form of communication where "no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation". On the other hand, it is the exact lack of explanation that exemplifies the story, where it is "left up to [the individual] to interpret things the way he [or she] understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks".

– *Irreducibility Everlasting: Language and Control*

forms of relation that are omitted by many scientific models.

For example, Robert Ryan, in a study of three urban natural areas in Ann Arbor, Michigan, found that the more active users of an area developed a 'place-specific attachment', protesting against proposed changes, favoring minimal management and a policy of letting nature take its course. Ryan notes the "very real sense of personal loss or grief when favorite natural areas are changed or threatened by change", emotions which are, however, "not always verbally expressed." The emotional relation to place, in a sense, was not merely an element of self, but reached beyond self to become a stabilizing force within the ecosystem, suggesting a potentially more integrated self-place system. Writ large, this may be the nascent form of a natural process that is usually stifled by forms of 'education' which emphasize the detachment of self from world: a process of *growing into* the world, so that identity is no longer simply *personal* identity, but becomes that of the person-in-the-world.<sup>[4]</sup> This form of identity, and its implications for ethics and epistemology, sits uncomfortably with our roles as consumers and workers; and it may embody a deeper truth that transcends short-term industrialist realities.

**Truth defined in this way as not only scientifically understood, but also as the sensed, felt expression of the forms that a healthy life in a healthy world might take, is only partly conscious and remains mostly at the level of 'gut feelings' within modern society.** Frequently, the forms in which it is expressible are either marginalized or intrinsically suspect: poetry and film are viewed as 'leisure' activities, licensed to depart temporarily from the important stuff of life such as share prices or genetic structures; and environmentalists are rightly suspicious of religious fundamentalisms, specious pseudo-sciences, or fanciful 'New Age' orientations. Sometimes, we feel pressured to translate our felt sense of what is right into the language of science, as Eugene Hargrove points out in referring to Ian Douglas-Hamilton's study of the attitudes of rangers in a Tanzanian national park. In this case, elephants were demolishing most of the trees, and one obvious course of action was to cull the elephants. But none of the rangers wanted to shoot the elephants, feeling that they had great

intrinsic value. Nevertheless "they did not believe that their feelings could be part of a professional justification for not shooting the elephants. Given that such justifications were closed off for him, Douglas-Hamilton concluded that he was supposed to find some facts that would independently justify this position so that aesthetic considerations would not have to be mentioned." **Truths expressible in the language of science are easily accepted.**<sup>[5]</sup> **Truths that cannot be so expressed may be constantly reborn in the fringes of consciousness, but are also constantly extinguished when they venture into the unsympathetic gaze of the technological world.** As a result of this repressive denial of our experience, truth shrinks back towards correctness; and the resulting unease is interpreted as individual pathology.<sup>[6]</sup> Visions of a healthy world based on felt truths and relations as well as on scientific knowledge are conventionally seen as unrealistic fantasies rather than possibilities to be worked towards; and so the corporate world replaces nature as the grounding basis of our lives.

### The 'Natural' in Industrial Society

Nature in its entirety is vastly more complex than the models we use to understand it [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg30]; and so while science offers us powerful understanding, there are certain aspects of nature that cannot be viewed through a scientific lens – as, I think, many scientists would agree. In a discussion of cartography, for example, Tim Ingold refers to the "discrepancy between truth and accuracy[...] the more [we aim] to furnish a precise and comprehensive representation of reality, the less true to life this representation appears." He continues: "[In the cartographic world] all is still and silent. There is neither sunlight nor moonlight; there are no variations of light or shade; no clouds, no shadows or reflections. The wind does not blow, neither disturbing the trees nor whipping the water into waves. No birds fly in the sky, or sing in the woods; forests and pastures are devoid of animal life; houses and streets are empty of people and traffic. [To dismiss all this] is perverse, to say the least. For it is no less than the stuff of life itself[...]"



Curiously, however, scientific models are often regarded as incorporating more accurate, deeper understandings than the realities they describe. Jean-Pierre Dupuy has pointed out that

the term 'model' in scientific discourse has a meaning opposite to that of everyday speech. Normally, when we 'model' something, we produce a representation, an imitation of it; whereas a scientific model "[enjoys] a transcendent position, not unlike that of a Platonic Idea [ed. – see *'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'*], of which reality is only a pale imitation. [...] It is at this point that the hierarchical relation between the imitation and the imitated comes to be inverted. Although the scientific model is a human imitation of nature, the scientist is inclined to regard it as a 'model' [for] nature. Thus nature is taken to imitate the very model by which man [sic] tries to imitate it."

In other words, our understandings of nature are claimed to be more real, more basic, than the natural world they set out to describe; and this suppresses all those qualities of nature that exist beyond science. While the domesticated world can, with some violence, be made consistent with scientific understandings, the wild world is, literally, another story. **Wilderness stretches away from us, extending beyond the horizon not only of our vision, but also of our understanding and our imagination. That is what makes it so hard to define: it is partly accessible, but also partly inaccessible.** As Edward Abbey remarks, wilderness "means something lost and something still present, something remote and at the same time intimate, something buried in our blood and nerves, something beyond us and without limit." In order to express some of what is beyond the horizon of current understanding, we have to embrace forms of communication such as fiction and myth. Myth need not be in opposition to reality, but can expand and deepen understanding so that it reaches toward currently unrealized possibilities.

**As Robin Riddington explains in discussing Dunne-za mythologies:** "*In our thoughtworld, myth and reality are opposites. Unless we can find some way to understand the reality of mythic thinking, we remain prisoners of our own thoughtworld[...]* the language of Western social science assumes an objective world independent of individual experience. The language of Indian stories assumes that objectivity can only be approached through experience. A hunter encounters his game first in a dream, then in physical reality. In the Indian thoughtworld, stories about talking animals and stories about summer gatherings are equally true because both describe personal experience. Their truths are complementary."

Ecological meanings that are becoming endangered continue to exist in the resonances evoked by the Seattle 'speech' or in Grey Owl's words, in the properties of nature that we sense experientially but

cannot express, and in the repugnance we feel about the technological transformation of nature. Our difficulty in articulating such feelings does not make them invalid, but tells us something about the narrowing conceptual frame within which we are tacitly expected to locate not only 'external' nature, but also our own lives and identities. As Leon Kass has argued: "[In crucial cases] repugnance is the emotional expression of deep wisdom, beyond reason's power fully to articulate it. Can anyone really give an argument fully adequate to the horror which is father-daughter incest (even with consent), or having sex with animals, or mutilating a corpse, or eating human flesh, or even just (just!) raping or murdering another human being??" Would anybody's failure to give full rational justification for his or her revulsion at these practices make that revulsion ethically suspect? Not at all. On the contrary, we are suspicious of those who think that they can rationalize away our horror, say, by trying to explain the enormity of incest with arguments only about the genetic risks of inbreeding."

While scientific language offers us the most powerful system of understanding the world has known, it is not a complete understanding. A mature scientific awareness should be ready to recognize the limitations of science, and to draw – albeit critically and cautiously – on other vehicles to convey and develop intuitions and feelings that are scientifically inexpressible.

### Cognitive & Ecological Realities

Much of what we hint at when we refer to 'ecology' has to do with the emergent properties of large systems – those properties that *depend on*, but are not *reducible to*, the properties of *components* of such systems. Similarly, much of what makes us human reflects the emergent properties of cultural systems that are scientifically inexplicable and empirically untestable. Rational understanding can explain the behavior of individual cells fairly adequately, that of individual creatures rather less adequately, and that of the larger systems we are part of hardly at all – which is why we have little comprehension of the direction our society is heading in, and even less of the large-scale ecological systems it is displacing. **Consequently, the most fundamental issues of our time are precisely those we can articulate least clearly;** and this largely accounts for our persistent attraction to cultural identities and texts which express more adequately our potential place within the natural world.

As soon as we learn to count and to categorize, we are cemented into a cognitive system that organizes the world through conceptual similarities and differences. As Tim Ingold points out, we

are taught that "every creature is specified in its essential nature through the bestowal of attributes passed down along lines of descent, independently and in advance of its placement in the world." Consequently, "difference is rendered as diversity. Thus living things are classified and compared [in] terms of intrinsic properties that they are deemed to possess by virtue of genealogical connection, irrespective of their positioning in relation to one another in an environment." A butterfly, we learn, is like a moth, but different to a buddleia. In ecological systems, however, butterflies and moths have few significant relationships; while butterflies and buddleias do. Our systems of classification, then, are selectively based in those specific natural characteristics that we can recognize and cognitively order, and we tend to ignore those other less accessible natural characteristics that have to do with relation and systemic functioning. The conceptual structure of rational thought, in other words, diverges from and takes precedence over the ecological structure of the natural world.

As Steve Buchmann and Gary Nabhan point out, a "biologically rich place is rich in relationships as well as in species. Conversely, the loss of biodiversity is always more than the simple loss of species; it is also the extinction of ecological relationships." **This suggests that the essence of a creature (including a human being), far from being defined just by innate characteristics, may reside partly in its developing relational extensions into structures larger than itself.** Just as the pink lady slipper orchid cannot reproduce itself without being part of a larger structure that also includes the bumble bees that pollinate it, so humans are dependent on the cultural structures that according to [Clifford] Geertz "are not mere expressions, instrumentalities, or correlates of our biological, psychological, and social existence; they are prerequisites of it." Consequently, the silent but relentless dilapidation of cultural, social, and ecological relations, although difficult to quantify, is as devastating for us as the absence of bumble bees is for the pink lady slipper orchid. Adopting a relational identity, then, suddenly brings into focus forms of damage that have previously seemed ephemeral. Loss of community, of extended family ties, of ecological relatedness, no longer seem less real than biological damage; and terms such as a 'broken heart' or an 'emotional wrench' begin to appear less as metaphors than as descriptions of previously hidden realities.

Those emergent properties that we term 'ecological', and that cognition finds difficult to cope with, tend to be omitted from our definitions of both nature and humanity. Today, the cult of individualism [ed. – see

**Symbiogenetic Desire**, fostered by capitalism, has pushed any structures larger than the 'things' we can see and identify to the periphery of what is cognitively acceptable. Just as "there is no such thing as society"<sup>[8]</sup>, so ecosystems, supposedly, are no more than "transitory assemblages of biotic and abiotic elements that exist (or could exist) contingent upon accidents of environmental history, evolutionary chance, human management, and the theoretical perspective one applies to define the boundaries".<sup>[9]</sup> According to Donald Worster, when population ecologists look at a forest, they see "only trees. See them and count them – so many white pines, so many hemlocks, so many maples and birches. They insist that if we know all there is to know about the individual species that constitute a forest, and can measure their lives in precise, quantitative terms, we will know all there is to know about that forest. It has no 'emergent' or organismic properties. It is not some whole greater than the sum of its parts, requiring 'holistic' understanding."

As one population ecologist puts it, if ecosystems have properties that are more than the sum of their parts, then "the study of these systems should perhaps be carried out by theologians rather than scientists."<sup>[10]</sup> Such views veto the scientific study of emergent properties, which are viewed as unreal or even nonexistent, just as Thatcher's statement about the nonexistence of society denies that we are defined partly by the structures we grow into and participate in. **The slippage is from methodological reductionism to ontological reductionism: in other words, it is one thing to recognize that understanding the pieces is a useful step in understanding the whole, but quite another to claim that the whole simply is the sum of the pieces.**<sup>[11]</sup> Writ large and translated into technological actions, this error obliterates the systems whose existence they deny:

not just ecological systems, but also social, linguistic and cultural ones, along with the emotional and spiritual possibilities that depend on their existence.

Furthermore, denying the existence of emergent properties results in an emphasis on constancy rather than change. Life

evolves through ever greater complexity of organization, including temporal organization; so while the basic components of life – say, molecules – remain the same, they become involved in increasingly complex patterns, processes, and cycles as we move towards more inclusive levels of functioning. **Defining a person or other natural entity by their fixed attributes rather than by the structures and processes they grow into during their lives puts a boundary around the individual ego and denies that growth can occur across this boundary.** If we assume that "persons embody certain attributes of appearance, temperament, and mentality by virtue of their ancestry, [and] these are passed on in a form that is unaffected by the circumstances or achievements of their life in the world"<sup>[12]</sup>, then identity shrinks towards our genetic and social origins, and it becomes impossible to extend oneself into any cause, idea, or vision that extends beyond one's own life. However, experience teaches us that if we work to conserve wilderness, join a community, change our spiritual allegiances, or give birth, these changes affect *who we are*.

Inherited attributes, rather than being taken as a starting point for growth and transformation through participation, are all too often taken as boundary conditions for identity. Our blindness to larger systems carries with it a secondary blindness: that which prevents us from recognizing the possibilities of our own transformation within these larger systems. As individuals, we can supposedly develop attachments to a few other humans while our relations with the rest of the world remain instrumental, based in assumptions of human control and economic exchange. Experiences of participation and empathy, especially with non-human entities, are regarded as, at best, harmless indulgences. Consequently, while our restless unease drives us towards consumerism and narcissistic forms of

'personal growth', experiences of self as undergoing profound transformations as we grow into larger systems are rare and often pathologized. As Anand Paranje notes, "one gets the impression that in Western philosophy and psychology there is a cultivated sense of aversion for any kind of personal transformation."

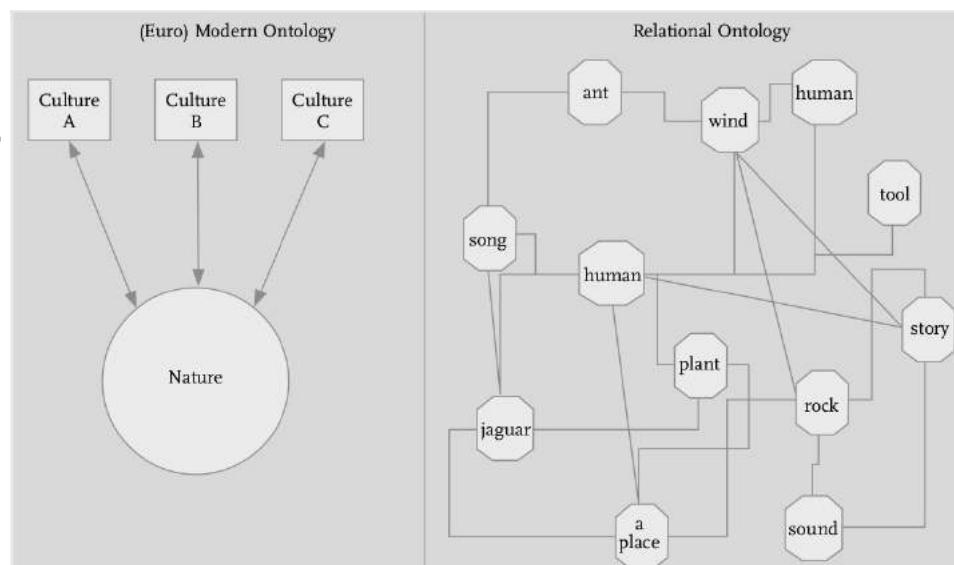


### Transformation & Authenticity

'Grey Owl's exposure as 'really' Archie Belaney reflects this conventional view of identity as largely predetermined. However far removed Grey Owl's new lifestyle was from the English cultural landscape, his accident of birth cast him as definitively English, and therefore restricted the identity choices available to him. The enormous diversity of possible occupational choices in industrial society conceals what virtually all these choices have in common: the assumption of a lifelong radical separation between the individual and the rest of the natural world. **In this situation where almost all identity choices embody the same underlying pathology and repression, it is not surprising that more adventurous souls may attempt to abandon this**

**social context for one that more adequately expresses their felt resonance with the natural world.**

**But this is a move that is fraught with problems.** Ethnicity and family background are not the only defining aspects of identity; but simply pushing them aside in the impulse to trade in one cultural frame for another is as



unrealistic as the opposite error of over-emphasizing them. Also, the desire to embrace another cultural framework as a 'lifestyle choice' within industrial society has spawned facile blends of New Age philosophy, pop psychology, commodified Asian religion, and supposedly 'Indian' wisdom, in which the conscious adoption of an 'alternative' stance covers up the less conscious perpetuation of conventional allegiances. In these respects, Archie Belaney was certainly not the most dishonest of the 'whiteshampions' who have emerged over the past century or so: at least he lived in the wilderness rather than staying in Beverley Hills and writing about an entirely invented experience, and he was closer to Thoreau [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.3 pg54] than we might comfortably acknowledge. The difference, of course, concerns identity: although he lived on the fringes of society, Thoreau never claimed to be other than Euroamerican. Why, then, did Belaney feel the need fraudulently to claim Indian parentage?

A possible reason is suggested if we compare the impact of the two men's writings. Before his exposure, 'Grey Owl' sold hundreds of thousands of books, drew large audiences across the world, and was courted by kings and queens. In contrast, Thoreau was a little known social isolate; and after the first print run of his most famous work, 'Walden', the book remained out of print until after his death. It appears that if fraudulently pretending to be a Native American is reprehensible, not being a Native American in the first place is almost as bad. One wonders how well known the 'Seattle speech' would be if it was instead referred to as the 'Perry speech'. **Could it be that recognizing the depth of our colonization by industrialism, we believe that only those writers who are separated from us by cultural background or the passage of time are felt to be acceptable as sources of environmental wisdom? Holistic environmental awareness seems to exist in a realm that is set apart from mainstream white society, a realm also inhabited by the ethnic, the spiritual, and the emotional; and what exists in this realm can only be admitted to consciousness if its subsidiary and subordinate status is first accepted. In other words, the truths inherent in this awareness are acceptable only on condition that they are simultaneously discredited.** This is consistent with Wendy Rose's observation that Native American writers are shelved under 'Indians', 'Western', or some such label, whereas their white counterparts are shelved under 'literature'. Furthermore, "if a Native American writer happens to gain international prominence [as in the case of Scott Momaday] critics and ethnographers

*exclaim that the author and his or her work is 'not really Indian'. Rather, it suddenly falls within the 'mainstream of American letters'".*<sup>[13]</sup>

**If feeling, spirituality, and ecological insights were seriously recognized and applied within mainstream white society, the consequences would be momentous, subverting our exclusive reliance on science and the entire anthropocentric [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg11] justification for the industrialist exploitation of 'natural resources'.**<sup>[14]</sup> **It is therefore necessary for feeling to be accorded a low status compared to rational argument, and relegated to a partly dissociated realm where it cannot seriously challenge industrialism. If a semi-permeable boundary is established between these two realms, the 'other' can be both acknowledged as a fringe interest while being ignored when the important decisions are made. The ascription of ecological wisdom to native cultures or past eras therefore protects mainstream white culture, allowing this wisdom a sort of dissociated survival within a subordinated sphere that is moored loosely alongside technological society without ever being fully accepted into it. 'Native literature' is one facet of 'multiculturalism' in modern society, suggesting the superficially democratic interaction of a range of ethnicities, religions, and cultures while actually cementing them into predefined places within an unshakeable politics of economy and power.**<sup>[15]</sup> **This allows spiritual and environmental awarenesses to be 'taken into account' in policy formulation where there is no risk that they would have any significant effect; or – if there is such a risk – they may be dismissed as 'unrealistic'. But nobody ever suggests that scientific and economic 'realities' should be 'taken into account': they are the unquestioned basis of decision making.**

Simply to dismiss Euroamerican fantasies about native cultures as 'fraudulent', therefore, is to miss the significance of this phenomenon. The underlying problem is

that certain types of experience cannot easily find authentic expression within industrial society, and are fundamentally incompatible with current economic structures. Since Euroamerican society is based on peculiarly irrational forms of economic 'rationality' and the rigorous exclusion of other meanings, it is difficult – without serious consequences – to embody ecological or religious principles in one's working life while remaining part of this society. Ecologically sound practices – along with growing vegetables, spiritual exercises, or camping in the wilderness – are 'leisure' activities that are separated from the serious business of earning a living. If we are sufficiently wealthy, of course, we can retreat to our islands of ecological correctness within the ocean of environmental desolation [ed. – see *New Technologies, Extraterrestrial Exploitation & the Future of Capitalism*]; but such 'solutions' do little to challenge the direction of mainstream society, and embody geographically already-existing psychological dissociations. For all but a few, an authentic relation to nature can exist only as fantasy; and it flourishes in this role precisely because our working lives often fail to fulfill our need to feel grounded and in contact with the natural world. A diversity of cultural and spiritual options, together with their associated environmental beliefs and practices, are allowed a superficial existence in order to camouflage and compensate for their opposite: the inescapable uniformity of a capitalist economic and political reality that is now the unquestioned basis of our lives.

In rather the same way that a mistress can perpetuate a moribund marriage by delaying transformative change, these sops to a healthy lifestyle and identity maintain industrialism – and its underlying assumptions – by providing temporary relief from it. However, as the object relations theorist Harry Guntrip suggested, while fantasy is healthy if it is a precursor to action, it is pathological if it is a substitute for it. **We need to ask ourselves: does the action we are taking challenge industrialism, or does it exist in the interstices allowed and shaped by industrialism?** If the latter is the case, then our humanity is being kept alive through a 'life-support system' of leisure activities and 'lifestyle choices' just to the extent that we remain available to be used within the industrialist system. There is no shortage of parallels here: forests, for example, are allowed to flourish to the extent that they provide 'timber'; so natural tendencies are permitted and used by the system to strengthen itself. Similarly, human needs and desires – most obviously, sexuality – that could be part of a healthy world become perverted and distorted when harnessed as part of the industrial system.

In contrast to most indigenous societies, industrial society defines 'culture' and 'nature' in terms of their supposed *opposition* to each other, leading to a chronic, institutionalized lack of psychological integrity. Our socially learned characteristics, rather than complementing and expressing those tendencies that derive from our embodiment as living creatures, are often seen as *replacing* them; and so our resonance with the natural world, if we are to retain our basic cultural orientation, has to occur in a dissociated realm. This is a recurring theme in theories of psychopathology from Freud onwards<sup>[16]</sup>, suggesting that it is the basis of a persistent cultural malaise. In Carl Rogers' 'person centered' approach, for example, psychological distress is viewed in terms of a lack of congruence between a bodily-based experiential self and a conscious self-concept that develops through the introjection of social mores and the denial of embodied awareness. **The notions of truth, reality, and identity implied by these two versions of self differ fundamentally; and one of the main tasks of education [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.2 pg27] is to reduce the resultant conflict by instilling the belief that embodied 'truth' is misleading and frivolous while consciously learned rationality is reliable and correct. But since conscious learning cannot completely eliminate embodied awareness, these repressed feelings will seek ways of expressing themselves symptomatically through an entirely different form of relation to the world, one which implants us empathically in the world as it abandons detachment and 'objectivity'.**

This implies a form of identity, and an understanding of human being, that utterly rejects the basic assumptions of industrial life, since – as Tim Ingold says of the Ojibwa<sup>[17]</sup> – the "achievement of empathy means taking on another way of being, [and] full understanding is attained not through translation but through metamorphosis."

**But while native ways of being can be appropriated as fantasies within an industrial lifestyle in rather the same way that tribal artifacts are used to decorate a modern living room, indigenous realities, if taken to heart, more often directly challenge rather than complement Euroamerican representations of nature.** The world represented in Native American writing, for example, diverges from the neatly arranged conceptual order that our cognitive representations assume, embodying – as William Bevis puts it – an "apparent fragmentation of the natural world into a huge cast of individual 'micro-characters', a fragmentation that has not been properly noted because it does not fit

*white formulas[...] Cows, bats, mosquitoes, blackbirds, coyotes, magpies act in their individual, peculiar ways".* This is a world which is *allowed to be*, seemingly incoherent because it has not yet been made to fit within a humanly recognizable order. One thing does not 'symbolize' another, conforming to any anthropocentric taxonomy of comprehension: things and creatures just *are*, in their own peculiar ways, and relating to them involves a self-transformative effort of empathy rather than an attempt to assimilate them to a pre-existing cognitive pattern. Bevis illustrates this by referring to the writing of D'Arcy McNickle: "*Archilde is at Mission School, and one afternoon a cloud "[by curious coincidence] assumed the form of a cross – in the reflection of the setting sun, a flaming cross. The prefect was the first to observe the curiosity and it put him into a sort of ecstasy[...] The Sign! The Sign!" he shouted. His face was flushed and his eyes gave off flashing lights - Archilde did not forget them. 'The Sign! Kneel and pray!' The boys knelt and prayed, some of them frightened and on the point of crying. They knew what the sign signified[...] the second coming of Christ, when the world was to perish in flames.*" The cloud, of course, melts away, but curiously Archilde does not need this empirical proof to reject Christianity's symbolic use of nature: "It was not the disappearance of the threatening symbol which freed him from the priest's dark mood, but something else. At the very instant that the cross seemed to burn most brightly, a bird flew across it[...] It flew past and returned several times before finally disappearing - and what seized Archilde's imagination was the bird's unconcernedness. It recognized no 'sign'. His spirit lightened. He felt himself fly with the bird."

For Archilde, openness to his sensing of the world takes precedence over any elaborate conceptual scheme. The world comes first. This is also true, Bevis argues, of other native American writers: in James Welch's work, for example, "[the natural world] is strangely (to whites) various, objective, unsymbolic, **as if it had not yet been taken over by the human mind.**"

Renouncing consumer society for the world that Welch and McNickle imply demands more than cosmological tourism. To paraphrase another critic of mercantile society, it is generally easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for an affluent inhabitant of the industrialised world to live in a spiritually and ecologically consistent way. The impossibility of reconciling the fundamental industrialist assumption that we are separate from the natural world (including our own bodies) with the indigenous belief that human society is grounded in the natural world leads us to dissociate nature

and feeling from economic 'realities'. Anything that challenges this dissociation leads to an unbearable degree of cognitive dissonance, in which mutually incompatible beliefs threaten to overwhelm our psychological equilibrium.

The assumption made by 'Grey Owl' that he could not, as Archie Belaney, achieve the more natural lifestyle he craved was well founded. As a teenager in Hastings, he "loved to go off on solitary walks to look for plants and wild animals"<sup>[18]</sup>; but in the stiflingly provincial life of southern England, these activities were necessarily part of a dissociated realm of bodily awarenesses and inarticulable intuitions. Such experiences of contact with the natural world, in one form or another, are important in the psychological development of most children; but as Cynthia Tomashow notes, for many of us, "*this aspect of identity seems to shrivel and recede [to the dark reaches of consciousness]*". Instead of developing and incorporating our bodily awarenesses as we reach out into the world, we instead learn that rational thought, the technological power that flows from it, and the economic structures within which 'business' can flourish are the fundamentals of life. **Unlike most of us, Belaney rejected this socialized mode of being: what we play at, he made the centre of his life, rejecting capitalist society and his past identity within it. In order to do so, he lied about his parentage; but whether this course of action demonstrates less integrity than our more usual acceptance of the dissociations inherent in industrialized life is debatable.** Under current conditions, the choice may not be a clear one between truth and untruth, or between authenticity and fakery; for each choice carries with it its own particular brand of inauthenticity.

### The Hunger for Form

The dearth of ways expressing and justifying our embodied awarenesses makes us hungry for any suitable form; and this makes it easier to understand the enormous popularity of the Seattle 'speech' and the writings of Grey Owl. The unexpressed emotional needs of Euroamericans, unable to find more authentic modes of expression, give rise to the invention of forms of 'indigenous wisdom' that are often unrecognizable by the indigenous peoples concerned.<sup>[19]</sup> Although this flourishing tradition of 'whiteshamanism' and the disingenuous literature it has generated are exploitative of the peoples and traditions they parody, the emotional needs that underlie them are real enough. These needs should be frankly recognized, and expressed in honest forms such as fiction that is acknowledged to be fiction, so keeping alive the vision of ecological integrity

such time as it can be realized in physical reality.

Such subjective awarenesses are allowed to play only minor roles in the material but illusory world that focuses on the production and consumption of commodities. In this manufactured world, "what we experience is not real and what is real is not what we experience".<sup>[20]</sup> While experience, in other words, in a flow of feelings, glimpses, intuitions, associations, and sensations, invites us to enter a world that transcends current actualities, this greater world is classified as unreal and replaced by a substitute, cognitive world defined in terms of material, biochemical, and economic categories that are learned but unfelt. Today, this partial view of reality is not just a learned understanding, however: increasingly, it is becoming the built structure of the world itself, so that the sort of world we have evolved to expect, hope for, and participate in is a latent world, hidden from us by a crude and degraded actuality. **The task facing the environmentalist of the future, then, may be less one of conserving a world that is under threat, and increasingly one of actualizing a world that exists largely as a hope, a memory, and an intuition.** As the novelist J. G. Ballard asserts, the "balance between fiction and reality has changed significantly in the past decades. Increasingly, their roles are reversed. We live in a world ruled by fictions of every kind – mass merchandising, advertising, politics conducted as a branch of advertising, the pre-empting of any original response to experience by the television screen[...] It is now less and less necessary for the writer to invent the fictional content of his novel. The fiction is already there. The writer's task is to invent the reality."



Subjectivity, then, is not just a froth on the surface of reality, to be skimmed off and thrown away. It can also be a guide to what is missing both from our own lives and from the contexts we inhabit. Perry's version of the Seattle 'speech' was, as he himself was at pains to point out, largely a work of fiction; but the roots of this fiction come from an awareness that extends well beyond present forms of consciousness

into the realm of a repressed, dissociated, cultural unconscious. As Rudolf Kaiser suggests, the Seattle 'speech' seems "to touch on an idea and a feeling that have so far largely been banned from our occidental, Christian, Western culture. **It is the idea that the worldly and the spiritual, the mundane and the beyond, the profane and the sacred are not wholly separate from each other, as we are used to thinking;** but that these seeming opposites are actually very closely connected in this world and that therefore everything in this world without any exception is seen as sacred in its nature and its character. **This idea that each and every thing and creature in this world is spiritual and sacred may well prove to be the salient point of this text[...]** for a society which has always neatly separated the temporal and the spiritual and in this way has tried to justify man's [sic] claim that all the non-sacred world is at his disposal."

The notion that, say, a Douglas Fir, far from being merely the 'raw material' for garden furniture, is part of a system that is both natural and sacred is so at odds with our lifestyle, our education, and our inflated material 'needs' that to express it is to risk ridicule. As I argued above, such notions can only be allowed to exist within consciousness on condition that they are relegated to a psychological bantustan of ethnic, spiritual, and environmental awareness that is excluded from the main current of our thought. While the text of the 'Seattle speech' was not written by Seattle, it nevertheless, as Kaiser argues, possesses a kind of validity; and it can be understood as the product of an awareness that is also a hope, one that resonates widely because it represents the shadow of the technological understanding

of the world. This awareness can in present times not survive within mainstream politics, and is not viewed as 'real'; so it is necessary that it lead a dissociated existence as 'fiction' or 'fantasy'. But it should be recognized that in important ways, these dissociated realms are more real than what currently passes for reality.

**As the destruction of the natural world proceeds, it becomes increasingly necessary to find ways of expressing not only what is, but also what could be:** a healthy world, and those larger resonant structures that will be an essential part of such a world. To the extent that theory is consistent only with current, diminished forms of reality, it will be incapable of providing a basis for a

movement away from these realities toward healthier ones: as [Herbert] Marcuse observed, to "the degree to which they correspond to the given reality, thought and behavior express a false consciousness, responding to and contributing to the preservation of a false order of facts." An adequate theory will also grasp the importance of relation, empathy, and emergent properties even when these are largely absent from the world today. In Michael Lambek's terms, the "basic question [is] whether [a] theory corresponds to the world as it is, [whether it has] veracity' (Descartes' [ed. – see *Veganism: Why Not?*] certum; or 'correctness'); or whether it provides an ideal and has 'verity' (Vico's *verum*) against which the facts must be measured and perhaps found wanting." We need to be clear about which version of truth we are working within; and whether the future world we envision is an extension of current realities, or a transformation of these realities.

If we are to keep alive the long-term aim of a healthy world, we need to recognize that the term 'fictional' need not always mean 'unreal', but can also refer to what is not currently actualized. **Great fiction can illustrate truths about life that are not always expressible through science; for science often captures the bare skeletons of once living creatures, shorn of everything that is inessential to the particular model adopted – the living flesh, the hopes and fears and beliefs, the connections and relations.** In this vein, the novelist Toni Morrison argues that since we haven't yet found a way to preserve subjectivity, it will necessarily be the first casualty of historical recording. Morrison therefore refers to her writing as "a kind of literary archaeology: on the basis of some information and a little bit of guesswork you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply. What makes it fiction is the nature of the imaginative act: my reliance on the image[...] on the remains[...] in addition to recollection, to yield up a kind of truth."

Such 'fiction', which attempts to reconstruct a meaningful world from a few residual fragments, is no less 'true' than more conservative writing which refuses to go beyond the fragments themselves. If we live – as we increasingly do – in a world of ecological fragments, then we cannot take this as the 'true' world: rather, we need to imaginatively reconstruct the possibility of a more whole, healthy world. As Morrison remarks, "[the crucial distinction] is not the difference between fact and fiction, but the distinction between fact and truth". This is a form of truth unrecognizable by those ostensibly 'objective' sciences that deny subjectivity any validity.

A reliance on 'facts', then, cannot be seen as an adequate default position: as Bernard Williams has pointed out, such a reliance "is itself an offence against truthfulness". David James Duncan makes a complementary point: "fiction-making and lying are two different things. To write *War and Peace* required imaginative effort. To embezzle money from a bank does, too. [This] does not make [Leo] Tolstoy a bank robber. *War and Peace* is an imaginative invention but also, from beginning to end, a truth-telling and a gift-giving. We know before reading a sentence that Tolstoy "made it all up", but this making is as altruistic and disciplined as the engineering of a cathedral. It uses mastery of language, spectacular acts of empathy, and meticulous insight into a web of individuals and a world to present a man's vast, haunted love for his Russian people. And we as readers get to recreate this love in ourselves. We get to reenter the cathedral."

A disciplined subjectivity can enable us to 'reenter the cathedral' of the wild world and to nurture it; for just as Descartes' subjectivity of doubt has been largely realized in a mechanical and unfelt world [ed. – see **Symbiogenetic Desire**], so a more complete subjectivity of empathy and relation can, eventually, be realized in a healthier one. As Ingold remarks, "we should resist the temptation to assume that since stories are stories [they are] unreal or untrue, for this is to suppose that the only reality, or true truth, is one in which [we can] have no part in at all. [Telling a story] is not like unfurling a tapestry to cover up the world, it is rather a way of guiding the attention of listeners or readers **into** it". It is not my intention to suggest either that science should be rejected or that fiction necessarily communicates truths; only that we need an understanding that as well as including science, also goes beyond it. An environmental movement, and a society, that limits its understanding to what is scientifically defensible impairs its ability to defend the natural world and is symptomatic of a crippled subjectivity.

Media such as film and fiction are not necessarily just the fanciful diversions of childhood, or distractions from the harsh realities of adulthood. If environmental ethics is to reach a wider

audience, as David Johns has argued, we will need to use forms of communication that are "explicitly emotive and personally grounded. [...] Although philosophy seeks to answer the same questions as myth – questions of meaning – philosophy does not even remotely approach the influence of the more potent modern forms of modern myth: novels and film. It would do well to learn from them."

Furthermore, if humanity and the non-human world are to survive in a more-than-biological sense, we will need to accept that we are continuous with our cultural and ecological contexts; and consequently, that authenticity is difficult to achieve in a world in which these contexts are degraded. We would do well explicitly to recognize our own colonization by industrialism, admitting that **the battle between ecological structures and industrialism is being fought within ourselves as well as in the world outside**. Just as the 'weeds' and 'vermin' that we have tried to annihilate may belatedly be recognized as forms of diversity necessary for the regeneration of the wild world, so censored modes of experience, together with the devalued forms of communication through which they can be expressed, may conserve aspects of reality that may one day become actual. The sort of truth conveyed by such forms, like that embodied in the Seattle 'speech' or in Grey Owl's writings, differs from that of the physical sciences; and this should be recognized as a strength as well as a weakness. There is a curious and paradoxical authenticity in accepting the present impossibility of either individual or ecological health; and in this acceptance we abandon our narcissistic individual aspirations for consistency, wholeness, and an 'ecological' lifestyle, instead aligning our imperfect lives with the dream, the vision, and the hope of a healthier future world [ed. – see **'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'**]. In working to bring about such a world, we rediscover our own authenticity.

"We tell a story that the world is a machine that can be programmed to serve our purposes. We tell a story that humans are the measure of all things, that we can justify enclosing other creatures in factory farms or animal-testing labs, clearcutting the great forests and poisoning the seas, killing off other forms of life to feed our hunger and desire. We tell a story that we can mold the world to the needs of the self, rather than molding the self to the needs of the world. These stories failed us long ago, and it is increasingly common now to hear the claim that we need "new stories" to replace them. These new stories, it is said, will be stories of belonging again. They will be stories of returning to the earth, of understanding our true place in the great maelstrom of the universe, not as gods now but as family members. [...]

New stories – or old stories in new form – will not be purely individual endeavors. They will not arise from research, from thinking, from analysis, from planning. They will not be utopian, globalist, all-encompassing, neat and satisfying. If we are to develop different ways of relating ourselves to the earth or to some new spiritual methodology that connects us back again to our natural heritage, this isn't going to come from our rational minds. It may not come from us at all. The mythologist Martin Shaw speaks of stories as being "*an echo location from the Earth.*" The old folktales and foundation myths, he says, were not purely the creations of human minds. Rather, those minds acted like aerials, telling a story

that a place, or the spirit of a place, wanted to be told. Such new stories, again, are the oldest stories of all: they are a retelling of the eternal story, from before we felled the tree. And they are not the product of thinking.

They are the product of listening." – *The Axis & the Sycamore*

1. Perry himself never claimed that the 'speech' was anything other than a work of fiction. See Rudolf Kaiser, "Chief Seattle's Speech(es): American Origins and European Reception".

2. Scientific disciplines do, of course, vary in their ability to express sensed qualities of the natural world. Some, such as physics, express a comparatively narrow range of properties, albeit with great power and accuracy; whereas others, such as conservation biology or ethnobotany, are sensitive to a much wider range of qualities. While recognizing this degree of variation, I use the general term 'science' in this paper to avoid lengthy qualifications and caveats.

3. David M. Levin, *The Body's Recollection of Being*.

4. See David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*, for a more extended treatment of these ideas.

5. ed. – "Science is founded on the idea that the results of its methods – which are very specific mathematical and experimental methods – are equivalent to what we mean by truth. The mythology holds that science describes physical reality, that science is truth. And if science is truth, then all other forms of truth – all philosophical truth, all ethical truth, all emotional, spiritual, relational, experiential truths – are devalued. They're regarded as something else besides truth. Scientists may agree, for example, that there is something called artistic truth, but they – and I'm talking not so much about specific scientists (although this is often true) as I am about what the scientific worldview does to all of us – don't think artistic truth has anything to do with the material reality that the scientist investigates. [...] Science is based on exclusion. [...] If you can convince people that science has a monopoly on truth, you may be able to get them to believe also that the knowledge generated through science is independent of politics, history, social influences, cultural bias, and so on" [Stanley Aronowitz]. And in the bargain, you can get them to doubt their own experience" (*Welcome to the Machine*).

6. This unease is reflected in striking increases in anxiety and depression in Europe and the USA over the past half-century or so. Despite greater material affluence, studies have typically found increases of several hundred percent in the prevalence of these disorders, so that

towards the end of the last century levels of anxiety among 'normal' children were higher than levels recorded among child psychiatric patients in the 1950's.

7. ed. – Regarding the morality claims here, aside from their pacifism which has been for us adequately discredited elsewhere (see **Return Fire vol.1 pg16**), added to acts of war and/or domination (not to mention starvation scenarios) there are a variety of other ways to look at the phenomenon of cannibalism. For example, Jared Diamond recounts a guy he was working with in Papua New Guinea preparing to return to his mountain village after the death of a relative, whose funeral rites included consumption of certain of their body parts by those close to them as a mark of respect and continuation of life.

8. As Margaret Thatcher famously observed.

9. R. Bruce Hull and David P. Robertson, "The language of nature matters: We need a more public ecology".

10. John L. Harper, "The heuristic value of ecological restoration".

11. ed. – This cynical argumentation is visible in, for instance, 'ecological compensation' schemes like that proposed in the area currently defended by the Z.A.D. occupation in Brittany (see **Return Fire vol.1 pg81**) where the construction company claims they will 're-create' an 'equivalent' wetland habitat hundreds of miles away to 'mitigate' loss for endangered species; occupiers responded by repeatedly preventing the collaborationist ecologists from coming to do their surveys and attacking their police escorts.

12. Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*.

13. Wendy Rose, "The great pretenders: Further reflections on whiteness".

14. ed. – While we see this as an absolutely necessary path to tread, it is also one that is massively complicated by the place we are starting from within Western society (see **Return Fire vol.39**). We'd concur with comrades of *Knowing the Land is Resistance*: "We need to critique and fight dominator science [ed. – see '**The Pond**'] to create space for us to trust our own experiences again, while reclaiming from it the tools we might need. We also need to prevent the space created in this way from being hastily filled by a supposed spirituality that projects our assumptions about the land back onto it, recreates our own alienation from it by trapping us in our own egos and imaginings, and supports new claims of unaccountable knowledge. It might sound like we're being really hard on spirituality, but it's because we consider it to be too important a project to move hastily. There is a huge grief involved in recognizing that we truly are alienated from the land, that there is no easy way out, that we really are so ignorant. We need to truly feel that and cultivate humility in the sorts of knowledge we claim access to. Our experience is that observing the wild closely and honestly leads inevitably to action in its defense and to clashes with power – the more these clashes are collective and sustained, the more we build a community that orients its values in line with the health of the wild. Such a community is the soil from which any spiritual practice might (re)grow. In particular, we've found close observations of healing wildlands to be full of profound truths about how to live in this world. Take a walk down the traintracks, through

old brownfields, rewilding farmlands, old quarries, around abandoned houses and buildings, and you'll see the plants and creatures who are courageously facing up to the utter devastation and who are working hard to recreate health and resiliency even in the most damaged places. Learning to appreciate the work being done by plants with deep taproots like chicory, burdock, and curly dock, for instance, not only inspires us to fight for health in hard situations, but gives us practical ideas about how this can be done. These are the roots of a new practice."

15. ed. – "The form which ethnic integration takes in western societies is the community leader phenomenon, also known as multiculturalism. Basically, this phenomenon operates by creating a stratum of privileged individuals within each disenfranchised or excluded group, whose purpose is to socially manage the group, to channel its frustrations into a positive attachment to an ethnic category, and to defuse these frustrations by means of the negotiation of this group's constructed identity within the system. The history of this strategy can be traced back to the British Empire, which often used local leaders (religious figures, chiefs, kings, etc.) in this kind of way – a strategy which was absolutely crucial to the management of a wide-ranging empire given the small number of settlers and administrators. It was also used in nineteenth-century Italy, where it took the peculiar form known as *trasformismo* – the beheading of social movements through the parliamentary or administrative incorporation of movement leaders or figureheads. It reached something akin to its modern form in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, which were the world's first multicultural states. Each "nationality" was permitted its own local party structure, representative institutions, and so on – but its representatives, much like today's community leaders, were appointed from within the party-state apparatus, usually by the central leadership, as a means of integrating the various "national" areas. It reached its current form as a response to social crises in countries such as America, Britain, Canada, and Australia – as a strategy for defusing the increasingly militant struggles of black people, migrant populations, and indigenous peoples. Though often counterposed to the monocultural models of ethnic-majority populism, it is in fact structurally similar, relying on a similar model of social integration through ethnic categories. A similar strategy has been used to contain prison revolt. When the black consciousness movement first reached prisons, the resulting assertiveness of black prisoners was welcomed by the entire prison population, as something that altered the balance of power between prisoners and screws and that won important gains for prisoners. To undermine this solidarity, screws started playing favourites – giving benefits to black prisoners only, to create resentment from other prisoners, or rewarding other groups for being compliant. In this way, one can see the origins of the ethnic prison gangs which have since come into existence. These gangs can be seen as at least partly a result of divide-and-rule strategies which used ethnicity to undermine resistance. When network social forms have outflanked control apparatuses, ethnicity can be used by states and other dominant groups in order to re-establish control. The effects of this become very clear in contexts where the state uses pogroms to defuse anti-state unrest. The Indonesian financial crisis of 1997 offers an especially clear

example – state forces suppressed popular anti-capitalist, anti-state and anti-dictatorship protests, but encouraged and collaborated with pogroms against the Chinese population of Indonesia. These pogroms served as a way to channel social discontent in a way which was harmless for the state and capitalism. This kind of pogrom may be uncommon in Indonesia, but the channelling of frustrations onto ethnic groups deployed socially as intermediaries is very common – not only are the Chinese frequently exploited in this way throughout Southeast Asia, but colonial regimes frequently used ethnic minorities (the *Tutsi*, the *Tamils*) or migrant communities (such as South Asians in East Africa) in the same way, and one could even interpret European anti-Semitism along these lines. In addition, ethnic politics based on pogroms and constant conflict is a normal part of capitalist management in certain parts of Nigeria (eg. Kaduna), Indonesia (eg. Ambon) and India (eg. Gujarat). There are also similarities with the situation in Sydney, where a racist pogrom – tolerated, encouraged, and incited by state agents – followed two years of mass unrest against the state. The boundary between rigid ethnic identities and loose affiliations in revolt against oppressors is a slim one [ed. – see '**The Invention of the Tribe**' below], and one which the socially excluded cross over on a regular basis; the emotional and psychological reactions generated by social and economic marginality and exclusion seem to be equally open to either kind of articulation. This fluidity is something the state exploits in order to prevent the kinds of revolts which really threaten its power. A similar observation could be made regarding events in Britain and France in November 2005. In France, the absence of multiculturalist integration left open the possibility of revolts which crossed boundaries of ethnicity and religion, and which were directed primarily against the state. The result was a massive urban insurrection organised on a network basis against the poor, directed primarily at crackdown culture and the repressive apparatuses of the state and capitalism. There was also unrest in Lodzi, Birmingham, at around the same time – an area which hosted a large anti-state uprising in the mid-1980s. In this case, however, the discontent – while clearly sparked by exclusion, poverty, and social alienation – was channelled in directions which were largely harmless to the state. Instead of taking the form of an uprising against the police, the revolt took the form of communal fighting between young men of Asian and African origin, on the basis of firm identifications with specific ethnic categories. This is the harvest the state has reaped for its strategy of multiculturalist integration – the use of ethnically targeted state patronage to solidify group identities, and the use of populism to channel concerns arising from social exclusion and economic precarity into ethnic categories" (Andy Robinson).

16. See, for example, his "Civilised sexual morality and modern nervous illness".

17. ed. – The Ojibwa (or Ojibwe, or Chippewa) are indigenous to 'North America', mostly living in the territory claimed by Canada but also the United States.

18. Donald B. Smith, *From the Land of Shadow: The Making of Grey Owl*.

19. ed. – "Western education predisposes us to think of knowledge in terms of factual

information, information that can be structured and passed on through books, lectures and programmed courses. Knowledge is something that can be acquired and accumulated, rather like stocks and bonds. By contrast, within the Indigenous world the act of coming to know something involves a personal transformation. The knower and the known are indissolubly linked and changed in a fundamental way. Coming to know Indigenous [ways of knowing] can never be reduced to a catalogue of facts or a data base in a supercomputer; for it is a dynamical and living process, an aspect of the ever-changing, ever-renewing processes of nature" (Blackfoot Physics).

20. Robert D. Romanyshyn, *Psychological Life: From Science to Metaphor*.

## 'ON REASONABLE GROUNDS'

On 5 June 2009, a deadly confrontation took place in the Peruvian Amazon between police forces and a group of protestors mostly composed of indigenous Awaj'un people who had taken control of a highway to protest President Alan Garcia's decrees facilitating the concession of their territories to oil, timber and hydroelectric corporations. Leni, a young Awaj'un leader, explained what motivated his participation in the protests: "We speak of our brothers who quench our thirst, who bathe us, those who protect our needs – [this brother] is what we call the river. We do not use the river for our sewage; a brother cannot stab another brother. We do not stab our brothers." [...] One is warranted in saying that in these cases the indigenous peoples are defending not simply access to and control over resources; they are defending complex webs of relations between humans and nonhumans, relations that, for them, are better expressed in the language of kinship than in the language of property.

[...] Attending to the limitations of an approach that takes for granted that 'natural resources' are what is at stake in so-called environmental conflicts, Arturo Escobar has stressed the need to consider the power differentials between various knowledges and



Left: "NO REDD [ed. - see Return Fire vol.3 pg8]: FORESTS AREN'T COMMODITIES!", protest after the Mexican State agreed to sell 'carbon credits' to the U.S.A from REDD schemes in the Lacandon jungle (rich with minerals and conflict between hydro-power, palm oil plantations for biofuels, road-building and the various indigenous lifeways; the government of Chiapas plans relocation of the communities to 'Sustainable Rural Cities[!]') to 'offset' Californian emissions. Right: More doublespeak: 'Environmental Police' formed to aid this dispossession and privatise biodiversity.

cultural practices. [B]y privileging a perspective that sees 'the environment' as natural resources to be exploited or protected over a model that conceives its constituents as nonhuman agents whose relations with humans are better conveyed in terms of kinship, a *cultural distribution conflict* is created. In other words, in these cases two different culturally specific ways of understanding the environment clash with each other. Of course, whichever cultural perspective gains the upper hand will determine the access to, use of and relation to 'the thing' at stake.

[A]n ontological conflict (i.e. a conflict about what is there) is treated as an epistemological conflict (i.e. a conflict about how different cultural perspectives see, know or struggle for what ontology has already established is there). [W]e must remain attentive to the power relations *between different knowledges*. Once we follow this line of reasoning it becomes pressing to shift focus from culture to the epistemic formation of which the very concept of culture is a part. Why? **Because besides being used by analysts and commentators to explain and know the conflicts, this concept is also used as a weapon wielded in the conflicts.** For example, indigenous peoples appeal to notions of cultural rights to confront processes that will affect their capacity to sustain their 'life projects.' In response, states, corporations and environmentalists dismiss those claims on the basis that respect for the culture of indigenous peoples should not obstruct the rational 'management' (whatever this might mean) of what in the last instance is just nature. At bottom what is being argued is that not all cultures or ways of knowing 'nature' (the world out there) have the same standing in rational politics, the arena where decisions affecting a territory and its population are debated.

[S]ome environmental conflicts both unsettle what is commonly construed as reasonable politics (i.e. a politics where the parties agree about what is at stake) and make evident **the limitations of the concept of culture, the tool with which the social sciences try to apprehend and make reasonable what in principle appears as lying beyond reasonable politics.** [...] In sum, between the roof of reasonable cultural demands and the floor of reasonable



environmental concerns, and between the left and right walls, lies the realm of *reasonable politics*. Beyond those confines lies irrationality, where politics is no longer possible. And precisely what lies beyond any rational politics is what these governments (like many others) refuse to engage with: the possibility that what is at stake in the conflicts does not fit within the nature/culture and left/right categories. Certainly anthropology and other social sciences have picked up what lies beyond reasonable politics and, showing that it has its own rationality as 'culture', have contributed to bringing it back into the arena of reasonable politics – but always subject to being judged according to dominant conceptions of what counts as a reasonable demand to have cultural differences respected. Thus, crucial to an understanding of the limits of culture to intervene in the conflicts that concern us is gaining a grasp of how the 'reasonable' gets defined in reasonable politics.

[...] The Peruvian president, Alan Garcia, tried two kinds of responses to the conflict in the Amazon mentioned previously. Before the violent clashes took place, he tried to dismiss indigenous demands as irrationality trumping progress. In declarations to the press he said, "These people are not first-class citizens. What can 400,000 natives say to twenty-eight million Peruvians, 'You don't have any right to come round here'? No way, that would be a grave error, and those who think that way want to lead us into irrationality and a backward, primitive state." After the violent clashes, public opinion at large turned against the government. Thus, seeing that his appeals to 'reasonable' did not work to sway the 'twenty-eight million Peruvians' in his favour and against the natives, Garcia tried another argument: foreign left-leaning governments (Venezuela and Bolivia) were behind the protest. [...] Besides demonstrating the self-interested readings that governments can make of popular protests, the responses are illustrative with regard to what is considered reasonable politics in Latin America. Facing indigenous demands for the right to decide over the conditions of their own lives, the right-leaning Peruvian government first sets a limit on what indigenous peoples can reasonably aspire to as citizens of a multicultural society: their 'cultural

differences' (e.g. their conception of natural resources as relatives) cannot override the progress and greater good of the nation. Seeing that the characterisation of the indigenous demands as irrational does not really work, the government then turns to another explanation: the mobilisation is not irrational but ideologically motivated. In other words, the mobilisation is about natural resources that leftist political forces want to use and control for their own purposes.

[...] Dismissing indigenous peoples' claims about what motivates their mobilisation and protests with the argument that such claims are unreasonable (either because they are based on mistaken beliefs or because they hide the real motivations) carries

the implicit assertion of an epistemologically superior standing. The dismissals are saying either ‘*You are confusing how things really are with what your culture tells you about them*’, or ‘*For ulterior motives you are trying to confuse us about how things really are*’; and in either case they are also saying ‘*We do know how things really are and must act in consequence*.’ Where does this ‘epistemological confidence’ come from? Bruno Latour’s characterisation of the two great divides shaping the ‘modern constitution’ might give us some hints: “*The Internal Great Divide [between Nature and Culture] accounts for the External Great Divide [between Us and Them]: we [moderns] are the only ones who differentiate absolutely between Nature and Culture whereas in our eyes all the others – whether they are Chinese or Amerindians, Azande or Barouya – cannot really separate what is knowledge from what is society, what is sign from what is thing, what comes from Nature as it is from what their cultures require.*”

In short, ‘moderns’ have more than a culture, more than a perspective: they *have knowledge*. And the confidence that they have more than a perspective is premised precisely on recognising the difference between what is nature (or reality out there) and what is culture (the subjective representation of reality). Recognising such difference has allowed moderns to develop the proper procedure for knowing reality as it is: universal science<sup>[1]</sup>.

**Here we go back to the justifications that the various agents of modernity (governments, corporations, environmentalists) advance to override the claims of indigenous peoples:** we cannot stop progress and the greater good in the name of respecting picturesque, perhaps lovable and romantic but ultimately unrealistic cultural beliefs. The forests are lumber, genetic pools, oil and water; mountains are rocks and valuable minerals; these are all things that can be turned into commodities for the growth of the economy. Certainly, environmentalists will jump in and say, ‘*Well, the science of ecology tells us that these are delicate ecosystems that cannot be destroyed without consequences.*’ ‘*No problem*,’ is the response, ‘*let the ecologists make environmental impact assessments and figure out exactly how much and in which ways we can pull resources out of the earth without completely destroying it.*’ Perhaps we can even preserve some hotspots of biodiversity for the benefit and aesthetic enjoyment of humanity.’ Now, at this point the conversation does not involve indigenous peoples any longer; now it is a conversation among members of the tribe of the moderns who are using their only reasonable protocol to determine how to treat nature: they use universal science. Nonhuman relatives? Spirits? Ancestors? Those are not within the purview of science, they are not real, they are human fabrications and therefore fall within the domain of culture<sup>[2]</sup>.

What is left for those who have culture but not knowledge? Well, they can claim in the political arena their right to keep their identities, their cultures and their beliefs, but can never expect that they will be taken seriously and at face value when they speak about what the moderns call *nature*. It is true that evolving national and international frameworks increasingly recognise a variety of

indigenous rights (to be consulted, to have their territories respected, to be compensated and so on), thereby creating a whole new set of instruments and avenues that indigenous peoples can use to defend their worlds. But these rights are all crafted to the dominant parameters of reasonability. Can you imagine a politician or a corporation stopping a profitable mega-development project because the natives say a spirit or ancestor does not want it? At best, the natives might mobilise their various rights and, if the political conditions are favourable, build alliances with other concerned groups until they are able to have politicians and corporations stop the project, but on *reasonable grounds!*

The reasonableness of the demands will depend on the degree to which they are aligned with ‘reality out there’. In other words, the test question that will be posed to these demands will be whether they are grounded on ‘reality’ or not. And who is to determine this alignment? Universal science? No surprise then about the army of expert consultants that indigenous peoples have to enrol to back up their claims and demands. **Thus, one of the problems with using the concept of culture to intervene in and analyse certain (so-called) environmental conflicts is that some participants in the conflicts seem to be more cultural than others, that is to say, they do not have real knowledge, they have cultural beliefs.**

[T]hose who have universal science, run with the advantage. The epistemic privilege of universal science might not be obvious and apparent in all cases where different ‘claims to know’ collide, precisely because of the role that multicultural tolerance plays nowadays in relation to indigenous peoples. Thus some cultural difference is tolerated inside the ‘house’ of reasonable politics. **However, it is precisely the term ‘tolerance’ that gives the game away:** in this context to tolerate means to suspend the application of the most rational understanding of reality in deference to those who do not know best. But as we can see time and again in many of the cases where ‘claims to know’ collide, tolerance can only go so far before universal science is brought to bear to demarcate the limits beyond which disciplining force is required to meet unreason – ‘unreason’ or ‘irrationality’ being just different words used to deny ontological differences. [...] But we can take the idea that some participants are more cultural than others in another direction: it might indicate that for some participants the world cannot be encompassed by the concept of culture, or nature for that matter.

1. By *universal science* I refer to an assemblage of knowledge practices that, associating themselves with but distorting the very specific nature of the truths produced by the experimental sciences, claims to know reality ‘as it is’. This assemblage has come to constitute a veritable regime of knowledge ingrained in modern governmentality.

2. Interestingly, the further environmentalists’ claims move from the assumption of ecosystems as anything more than a very complex organic machine ruled by laws that are knowable and therefore manageable, the more they start to join the ranks of ‘cultural’ claims, that is, claims based on morals, beliefs or whatever but not on the hard facts that science is supposed to deal with.

## **'The Invention of the Tribe'**

[ed. – *The next review is translated from the French-language anti-civilisation journal La Mauvaise Herbe, Volume 12 no.1]*



*“The history of people who have a history is, we are told, the history of class struggle. The history of people without a history is, we might say with at least as much truth, the history of their struggle against the state.”* Pierre Clastres, *La société contre l’État*, 1974.

*The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, James C. Scott, Yale University Press, 2009 – 442 pages

Whole societies without a State have existed until recently in Zomia, the vast mountainous region of south-east Asia which is far from the urban centres and significant economic activity.

This zone is also situated between eight nation-states, where several cosmologies and religious traditions co-exist and where the inhabitants have a chameleon identity, in other words one of multiple identities.

This a zone which States only managed to penetrate in the mid 20th century and then only with the aid of modern technology. This type of zone has also existed elsewhere in the world; in the Alps, the Appalachians, the Atlas mountains etc. Other kinds of geographical zones have also managed to remain outside the reach of States: seas, archipelagos, marshlands, coastal mangroves, forests, arid steppes, deserts etc [ed. – ‘smooth’ space, a term in contest; see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg56].

In this book, the author argues that hill people are best understood as communities of runaways and fugitives

who, in the course of 2,000 years, have fled the oppression of State projects in the valleys – slavery, taxes, forced labour, epidemics and war. Tales of escape run through countless legends of the hills. These people's physical dispersion across a rugged terrain, their mobility, their subsistence practice, their family structure, their chameleon ethnic identity and their devotion to millenarian leaders<sup>[1]</sup> have enabled them to avoid being incorporated into States and have prevented the State from emerging amongst them. He also argues that the culture of certain foods, the social structure made up of small autonomous groups and the patterns of physical mobility were political choices.

But since 1945 the capacity of the State to deploy distance-eliminating technology – railways, roads that stay open all year, telephones, telegraphs, aircraft and IT – has completely overturned the strategic balance of power between the autonomous peoples and the nation-states.

Everywhere, States have invaded the “tribal zones” to extract natural resources and ensure the security and productivity of their periphery. Everywhere, they have ended up colonising the mountains and importing the slave-subject-citizen model.

### Hills, Valleys & States

Zomia illustrates the extreme divide between inhabitants of valleys and those of the mountains, between those on the lower and higher reaches of the rivers. The populating of the hills goes hand in hand with the State-forming process in the valleys, with the colonisation of the land, the creation of borders and the grabbing of resources (slaves and raw materials).

Living without state structures was the norm in human history. When the State appears, living conditions change for semi-sedentary horticulturists, pushing many of them into fleeing taxes and war.

The arrival of agriculture as the principal means of subsistence, and of State society, came with new strategies for “bringing together the population”, such as the establishment of permanent villages, thus replacing open common property with closed private property.

Across the world, the phenomenon of enclosure<sup>[2]</sup> aimed to make the peasantry and the periphery

profitable, forcing peasants to contribute to the wealth of the empire and into commercial exchanges, in the name of “development” and of “economic progress”. In practice, this amounts to making their activities ratable, taxable and liable to seizure.

**This enormous ungoverned periphery (Zomia) long constituted a threat for all the States present in the various valleys. It sheltered fugitive and mobile populations organised on a subsistence basis – gathering, hunting, peripatetic [nomadic] growing, fishing, small-scale livestock farming – which were fundamentally resistant to appropriation by the State. But the biggest threat for the States was the constant temptation and alternative that it represented for their own populations of slaves; that of a life beyond the reach of the State.**

A massive majority of the population of the first States was not free. Many dreamed of escaping from taxes, feudal labour and a condition of servitude. In pre-modern conditions, the concentration of the population, the presence of domestic animals and their heavy nutritional dependence on a single variety of grain brought damaging consequences for the wellbeing of humans and harvests alike, making famine and epidemic commonplace. People also fled conscription, invasion and pillage, all very frequent in State-run spaces.

The non-civilised chose their place, their subsistence practice and their social structure in order to maintain their autonomy. **They were not “left” to one side by civilisation, but should rather be seen as adaptations designed to escape both from capture by the State and from**

**the formation of a State.** In other words, these are political adaptations of State-less people to a world which consists of numerous States.

The history of the civilised is the history of the State and of sedentary agriculture. Cereal-growing on fixed fields is the foundation of its power.

Peripatetic agriculture, slash-and-burn, was much more widespread in the hills and permitted crop diversity and

physical mobility. Sedentary agriculture brought with it property rights, the patriarchal family enterprise, and encouraged big families. Cereal culture is inherently expansionist [ed. – see the companion piece to *Return Fire* vol.3; *Colonisation*] and generates a surplus of population and the colonisation of neighbouring land, while being liable to famine and epidemic. However, as they had a constant need to keep the population together for work and war, States had to use generalised slavery to survive as ideological entities.

As a general rule, the social structure in the hills was much more flexible and egalitarian than in the hierarchical and formalised societies of the valleys. The higher the altitude, the less hierarchical and more egalitarian the structure. The inhabitants of the hills paid neither taxes nor tithes. It isn't surprising that they still host separatist movements, struggles for indigenous rights, millenarian rebellions and armed opposition to the States. This resistance can be seen both as a cultural rejection of the patterns of the inhabitants of the plains and as a zone of sanctuary. Many inhabitants fled to the hills to escape State projects in the valleys. The nomadism of the hills is also a strategy of survival and the multiple rebellions of these regions pushed many to seek refuge in even more remote regions. This historical pattern of flight is therefore a stance of opposition if not resistance.

### State Space

As elsewhere, cereals (such as rice) constitute the foundation of State projects. From the perspective of a tax collector, cereals have a considerable advantage over root crops. Cereals grow above the ground and ripen at around the same time. Harvests can therefore be calculated in advance. They have the effect of anchoring populations in a territory and raising their visibility.

The State depends on its capacity to gather crops within a reasonable distance. The further that the place to be controlled lay from its centre, the further the power of the State dwindled. Watercourses were the pre-modern exception to its limits. Before modern technology, it was difficult for States with navigable watercourses to concentrate and project their power and cultural influence. Flat lands thus enabled State control and appropriation (State space), while undulating land is intrinsically resistant to State control (non-State space).

Hills and marshes were sparsely populated and their populations practised forms of mixed agriculture (peripatetic growing of mountain rice and root vegetables, gathering, fishing and hunting) which were hard to assess and even harder to appropriate. Before modern technology, the state was a seasonal phenomenon in



the hills; in the rainy season, from May to October, the rain rendered the roads impassable, making year-round military occupation impossible. **The inhabitants of the hills also knew when to expect the arrival of the armies and the tax collectors. These people had only to wait for the rainy season, when the supply routes were broken (or more readily sabotaged) and for the garrison to be facing famine or in retreat.** The coercive presence of the State in these zones was episodic, or practically non-existent.

### Concentration of Workforce & Cereals

Political and military supremacy calls for a concentration of the workforce within reaching distance. The concentration of the workforce is only possible with sedentary agriculture. And such agro-ecological concentration is only possible with the irrigated growing of rice (or other cereals). This constitutes the most efficient means of concentrating workforce and foodstuff. The two other means of achieving this are the taking of slaves and pillage.

Peripatetic agriculture offers a greater return for less effort and produces a considerable surplus for the families which practise it. This type of growing disperses people across a territory, forming a constraint to the State's need to concentrate the population and making it difficult and costly to collect the food. Unlike monoculture, mixed and dispersed agriculture ensures nutritional balance and offers greater resilience to diseases and pests than does monoculture. Moreover, farm animals transmit numerous illnesses to humans. Overall, monoculture provides a diet that is nutritionally inferior to a mixed diet. However, rice alone could not support a denser population, but did mean the population was more readily mobilised when required for feudal labour or war.

The growth of population by means of war and slave-raids is considered to be at the origin of social hierarchy and the centralisation of the first States. Kingdoms expanded their workforce base by forcing prisoners of war to settle in their territory and by kidnapping slaves. Soldiers burned the fields and homes of the captives to stop them from returning there. They razed forests, turning them into fields and drained the marshes. **The majority of royal decrees were against runaway serfs, forbidding them from leaving, from moving home or from ceasing to grow cereals.** Many subjects were even tattooed to indicate their status and their master. In pre-modern systems, only physical coercion can guarantee property and the accumulation of wealth.

**Monoculture encourages social and cultural uniformity on many levels:** in the family structure, in the value of child labour, in diet, in architectural styles, in agricultural rituals and in market exchanges. A society shaped by monoculture is easier to watch over, evaluate and tax than a society shaped by agricultural diversity. Empires have tried to eradicate peripatetic agriculture, because its produce was not accessible for State appropriation. In modern times, two other reasons have pushed States to eradicate peripatetic growing: political security and the control of resources. Peripatetic fields and forests are therefore burned, razed and eventually replaced by mines. States thus minimise the chances of survival for the inhabitants of the hills outside State spaces.

### Civilisation & the Ungovernable

The narrative of civilisation is one of development, progress and modernisation. To be civilised is synonymous with being governed: living in a permanent village, cultivating fixed fields, recognising the social hierarchy and practising one of the principal salvation-based religions [ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg40]. In the eyes of the civilised, the level of civilisation can be read by means of altitude: those living on the peaks are the most backward; those living halfway down are slightly more cultured and those who live on the plains and grow rice are the most advanced, albeit still inferior to those living in the heart of the State.

The more you adopt the dominant culture, the higher you raise yourself culturally. Even if you live on a mountain, you are always "higher" in town and "lower" outside. This has nothing to do with altitude, but with cultural elevation. When entire peoples lead, out of choice, a semi-nomadic lifestyle, they are seen as a threat and stigmatised. Social policies and government aid measures are put into place to bring these "uncouth and backward" people back into the fold of civilisation. All those finding refuge among the rebels are associated with a primitive condition, with anarchy.

The Great Wall of China in the north and the Miao walls in the south-west were built not to prevent



barbarian invasions but to keep overtaxed peasants from escaping to live with the barbarians. **It's in the light of administrative control, and not of culture in itself, that we should understand the invention of ethnic categories at the borders.** An ethnic group is no more than a social status, a way of telling whether and how those in question are administered by the State. A barbarian region is thus a political place facing up against the State; it is a social position. The civilised are completely incorporated into the State and have adopted the customs, the habits and the language of the dominant group. Going off to live with the barbarians was less the exception than the norm; if you left the State space you were in a political space that was free and autonomous.

### Keeping the State Out of Reach: Populating the Hills

Mountain people can be seen as refugees displaced by war and choosing to stay out of the direct control of State authorities. These authorities tried to control the periphery by grabbing the fruits of their labour, taxing their resources and by recruiting soldiers, servants, concubines and slaves. The history of their flight is recalled annually by the mountain folk with various rituals and their traditions are culturally encoded within a strong tradition of familial and economic autonomy. The valleys can revert to the characteristics of the social life of the hills following a collapse of empire. Empires fear these latent forces on their borders and have constantly launched campaigns of assimilation or extermination, particularly after popular insurrections.

The principal reason for flight was war; when entire armies go on the pillage, destroying everything in their path, capturing slaves and raping, the inhabitants of the valleys are pushed out towards zones beyond the reach of the State. Banditry and revolt were widespread practices, but the typical response was to escape into a remote zone where the coercive force of the State was the least felt, while the elites moved towards the centre. Those withdrawing towards the mountains saw there a significant natural advantage. They could, at any moment, block the various accesses and, when necessary, withdraw even deeper into the mountains.

**Mountains favour defensive warfare in general and provide countless sites where small groups can hold**

**off a much bigger force.** They can also destroy bridges, prepare ambushes or booby-traps, bring trees down across roads, cut phone and telegraph lines, etc.

### Escape the State.

### Prevent the State.

Those who try to escape the State can use several strategies: fleeing into inaccessible zones, scattering and dividing into smaller groups and adopting subsistence techniques which are invisible and low-profile. In other words, when a society or part of a society chooses to flee from incorporation and appropriation, it moves towards simpler, smaller and more dispersed social entities. These remote regions are thus a choice and part of a strategy enabling people to stay out of reach of the State.

Peripatetic agriculture is a way of escaping the grip of the State. All the representatives of the States of south-east Asia have discouraged or condemned peripatetic agriculture, because it is a fiscally barren form: diversified, dispersed, difficult to watch over, to tax and to confiscate. Peripatetic agriculture offers relative freedom and autonomy. By growing root vegetables, hunting and fishing, nobody needs to work for a wage.

**Tribes and States are mutually constituted entities.** There is no sequence of evolution; tribes do not precede States. They are social form defined by their relation to the State. And when there is a hierarchy in a tribe, it is often a theatrical performance by a group to adapt to its relationship with the State. The position of the hill-dwellers is that of equality, autonomy and mobility. Amongst the Kachin gumla, there is a tradition of assassinating, deposing or abandoning more autocratic chiefs. They have a long history of applying egalitarian social relationships by deposing or killing chiefs with over-large ambitions for governing. The Lisu, Lahu, Karen, Kayah and Kachin are known for their tradition of anti-chief rebellion.

But it is flight, rather than rebellion, which was the foundation of freedom in the hills: many more egalitarian communities were founded by fugitives than by revolutionaries.

### The Invention of Ethnic & Tribal Identities

Ethnic identity is defined by the mode of subsistence and the belonging or non-belonging to a State; it is a social position regards the State. It is a sort of cultural phenomenon. States are made up of prisoners and slaves and slavery is primarily an urban phenomenon. The slave-raids at the periphery were aimed against the hunter-gatherer and horticulturist animists [ed. – see *Return*

*Fire vol.4 pg40]* so as to deport them towards the needs of the centre. Seeing as most of the town-dwellers originally came from the hills, do they really share an ethnic identity?

The Karen people and many other minorities seem to be *ethnically chameleon*, capable of passing from one identity to another without problems. Living close to a diversity of cultures, ethnic chameleons learn the performances required by each of the cultural paradigms. For example, the Lua/Lawa, who are animists, who practise peripatetic agriculture and speak a Mon-Khmer language at home, are skilled in the Thai language when they move into the valleys. Ethnicity is thus a self-made project; those who adopt a specific identity become members of the identity in question. Ethnicities in the hills are not rigid, but are deployed in the aim of incorporating neighbouring populations. The area has been populated for 2,000 years by wave after wave of people fleeing State centres, invasions, slavers' raids, epidemics and feudal demands. There they joined localised populations in hilly and relatively isolated areas. They accentuated the phenomenon of complex dialects, customs and identities.

The identities found in the hills represent a position against the States of the valleys. They have been put into the service of autonomy and the absence of State. The anti-State identity is perhaps the most common foundation of mountain identities up until the 20th century, when a life outside the State was still possible.

States assimilated all the persons that they captured, but the culture under a State barely altered as a result because the dependence on just one

kind of cereal crop ended up dominating the work routines of a majority of the people. The homogenising effects of an agricultural system and a class structure were often punctuated by revolts, reproducing the previous social order under a new administration. The only structural alternative was flight towards the communal properties in the hills.

### Porous, Plural & Fluid Identities

Most of the hill peoples of south-east Asia didn't have what we regard as proper ethnic identities. They identified themselves often by the name of a place – the people of this or that valley or catchment basin – or by a lineage or family group. Their identity varied according to

the person they were addressing. **Many names were implicitly relational – the people from up high, the people of the western ridge – making sense only as an element in the relational whole.**

Others names used were those given by foreigners, as was the case with the Miao. Most of the hill-dwellers had a repertoire of identities which they could use according to context. A person's ethnic identity would be in a sense the repertoire of their possible performances and the contexts in which they were displayed. Ethnicity is not a given, but a choice.

Across the world, colonial forces have identified and codified customs and traditions with the aim of using them as the basis for indirect power via the nomination of chiefs. This technique involves not only new fixed identities, but assumes a mainly hierarchical and universal order. Egalitarian and chameleon peoples without chiefs or permanent political order beyond the hamlet or the family line have no place in this order of things.

There was a lack of institutional levers by which they could be governed. These institutions were introduced by force. For example, in their dealings with the Kachin, Lahu, PaO, Padaung and Kayah, the British handed institutional power and privileges to a few local chiefs so as to control them better.

**In any case, once it has been invented the tribe takes on a life of its own. An entity created as a political structure in order to govern has turned into an expression of political protest and self-affirmation. It has become the recognised means of stating a claim regarding one's autonomy, natural resources [sic] or the earth. Confronted by peoples without a State, the State only recognises claims based on ethnic identities and tribal rights.**

It's the standard mode of making claims to States and answers the same needs as a trade union or association in contemporary society. The more you look at the reality behind the concept of the tribe, the more it seems to be the creation of the white man [sic] to describe indigenous people, to be able to negotiate with them, administer them, encourage them to think in the same way. The invention of the tribe must be understood as a *political project*.<sup>[3]</sup>

The vagueness of social forms in the hills, the historical and genealogical flexibility and the baroque complexity of languages and populations, all form part of the constitutive characteristics of hill societies.

1. ed. – *Leading via apocalypse visions.*

2. ed. – see *Return Fire* vol.4 pg51

3. *The creation of the Cossacks as a self-conscious ethnicity is particularly instructive in grasping this phenomenon.*

*Those who became Cossacks were fugitives and serfs who fled western Russia in the 16th century for the steppes of the River Don so as to escape social control. They had nothing in common with each other, apart from their servitude and their flight. They were geographically fragmented into 22 groups. They became a people because of the new environmental conditions and subsistence routines. They established themselves alongside Tatars, Circassians and Kalmyks. They lived by a communal land system, were egalitarian and had total freedom of movement. Cossack society was thus a mirror image of the servitude and hierarchy of tsarist Russia. The three big revolts which threatened the empire started in Cossack lands. After the failure of the Bulavin Rebellion (1707-8), the Cossacks were forced to provide the tsarist army with cavalry units in exchange for the preservation of their autonomy. And after the defeat of Pugachev's Rebellion (1773-74), their local democratic assemblies were replaced by a Cossack aristocracy.*

## 'THE COLONIAL CENSUS'

In relation to indigenous societies, Rohrlich-Leavitt noted that “gatherer-hunters are generally non-territorial and bilocal; reject group aggression and competition; share their resources freely; value egalitarianism and personal autonomy in the context of group cooperation; and are indulgent and loving with children.” Where distinct groups exist, they often relate in a networked way – the gift networks [ed. – see ‘*Rejoin the Circle*’] of the Trobriand Islands and the extended kinship networks of the Lakota being two examples. **One characteristic of such societies is the non-exclusive nature of attachments and affinities, and hence the absence of an overarching identity.**

Even in the strongest kinds of segmentary lineage systems that come closest to fixed group identity, the existence of extra-familial affinities operates as a restriction on ingroup-outgroup patterns, ensuring some degree of social openness.

[...] In most of the world, modern ethnicity is a colonial invention. It apparently derives from some combination of nationalism – a phenomenon dating back three centuries at most, arising among Europeans and settler-colonists, and basically constructing spooks of sameness linked to the rise of industrial technology – with theories of biological superiority derived from discourses of aristocratic class privilege. Colonial administrators and their pet anthropologists and social scientists went to great lengths to categorise people into groups based on ethnicity – the basic function of the colonial census as a device of subject-construction, as well as to construct and promote discourses differentiating the various groups and associating them with some eternal essence. In some cases (such as Vietnam), colonisers actually went to the lengths of inventing an entire written script in order to construct the colonised population as an ethnicity.

[...] Capitalists are only able to profitably exploit societies in which a capitalist infrastructure has not yet been constructed, by working with and through existing social relations; often, this means finding ways to incorporate networks. And it is here that ethnic and patronage networks become useful.

The distinction between ethnic/patronage and horizontal/affinity networks is subtle, because the external organisational forms are often quite similar. The difference is that, whereas the latter involves horizontal links and structural openness, the former introduces a hierarchical element which is potentially system-integrative or leaves the network open to integration.

In the case of ethnic networks, this hierarchical aspect is an identity category, a strong discourse of Us and Them defining the network and its resources as the exclusive property of an authoritative social group. In patronage networks, this identity-basis is used in combination with a hierarchical situation – an asymmetrical control over resources – to integrate the network around relative privilege, under the control of an elite within the group who hold positions of power and use them to the advantage of the group (and to the disadvantage of outsiders). **It is my contention that patronage networks based on ethnic, religious, and sectarian affiliations are the primary form of system-integration in the global periphery**, and that these networks occupy such a role because of their proximity to the affinity-network form which arises among the

dispossessed. **Ethnicity is thus crucial as the primary recuperative device used by the powerful in the world system to contain the insurrection of the global poor.**

[...] The distinction between affinity networks and ethnic-based movements is clearer in the case of Manipur. In 2004, a mass social movement against emergency powers shook the Indian occupation. This movement was not based on ethnic categories, but rather, operated across the lines of the various social groups. One of its most notable features was the adoption of a fragmented, centreless, localised form of organisation in which social groups, classes, villages, and so on, were able to organise their own autonomous activities. This proliferation of direct action overwhelmed the state machine. One report states that ‘[t]he entire stretch of the road, from Karong to Hiyangthang was dotted with such barricades, and attempts by the police to clear the road were frustrated due to the sheer number of agitators’. With villagers in each area organising autonomously, the state was overwhelmed by action. Parallels with effective anti-capitalist and ecological direct action in the west are very obvious here.

In contrast, ethnic politics in Manipur takes the form of the operation of a number of hierarchical armed opposition groups. Each of these groups is attached to one or another ethnicity, and their methods take the form of persecution and exclusion of others. Each is fighting for some kind of state in the world system – greater privileges in the distribution of patronage, an independent state under the control of a specific group, or the institutionalisation of one or another set of privileges (such as language criteria) establishing the supremacy of a particular ethnicity. While Meitei groups seek an independent state of Manipur, Naga and Kuki groups fight for separate homelands, and in contrast to the popular autonomy expressed by the social movements, the armed opposition groups operate in an extremely hierarchical way, imposing “moral codes” (such as traditional dress and alcohol prohibition) by means of violence and punishment.

[...] A similar distinction can be made between the kind of messianic Judaism embraced by authors such as Walter Benjamin and Martin Buber, and the type espoused by statist Zionists as the basis for constructing an ethnically exclusionary state. European racists found

Jews threatening precisely because of their non-inscription in the state system and their resultant outsider status. It was from this position – as bearers of hybridity and as people “out of place” – that the most important radical developments of Jewish thought have arisen. In contrast, with the exception of a small neo-Nazi fringe, the normalisation of Jewish identity through the creation of a state-based ethnicity has effectively defused anti-Semitism among European nationalists and statists.

Rather, there is now a kind of fellow-feeling with Israel as a western-allied power contributing to world-system integration in an unstable region. **This rapid turnaround from hostility to commonality can be explained in terms of the system-integrative functions of ethnicity.**

Contrary to appearances, what European statists hated about Jews was not anything specific to this particular group, but rather, the fact that a particular group (any particular group – one could also refer to the Roma here) could not be inscribed in the dominant system. The moment this exceptional status was eliminated by means of integration into the dominant system of representations, a discourse of antagonism was replaced by a discourse of similarity and equivalence.

# Q

by Luther Blissett [1]



It is 1519, the opening of a century of religious upheaval, peasant revolt, heresy, and Inquisition.<sup>[2]</sup> A student in Wittenburg meets radical theologian Thomas Müntzer, just two years after Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the cathedral there and began the Protestant Reformation.<sup>[3]</sup> In the same year a mysterious papal agent sets in motion a project of espionage and disruption against Luther and those who took Luther's challenge to the Catholic Church even further. So begins the story told in Q.

*"It is my destiny to survive, always, to go on living in defeat, taking it a little at a time [...] This is a game that demands to be played to the end; if that is the case, then so be it."*

The student, who adopts many names as he traverses Europe, goes on to participate in the upheavals and narrowly escape the inquisitions and massacres of the 16th Century. Like Emmett Grogan in his exaggerated autobiography Ringolevio, one can almost read this character as the trans-historical ghost of revolt, surviving impossibly from one conflagration to another.<sup>[4]</sup> Alongside his story appear the letters and diary entries of his lifelong foe, the papal spy Qoelet, who participates in all this as well, albeit fighting for the other side. Together they provide a fictional firsthand account of over three decades of European history.

In addition to retelling the radical events surrounding the Reformation, Q functions as a critical allegory of the social movements of the 20th century. The book should be read with this in mind, though the metaphor can be thin at times,<sup>[5]</sup> and a critique of machismo and sexism is also lacking.<sup>[6]</sup> One could interpret passages such as Chapter 54, which consists almost entirely of male characters conversing while being fellated by women described only by the size of their breasts, as biting caricatures of the worst sexism reproduced by supposed radicals; but these make for unpleasant reading all the same, and the absence of the women's liberation movement from the allegory speaks to a sexism that runs deeper than a merely narrative weakness in the story.

Strong female characters like Ottilie Müntzer and Ursula Jost do not offset this.

Like Balestrini's The Unseen, reviewed in the previous issue of Rolling Thunder, **Q details the horrors and defeats that frequently are engendered as much by our own actions as by those of our enemies**; in view of these, it offers proposals as to how we can advance our projects of revolt today. There are two main strategic proposals put forward. The first is an individual and subjective proposal: we should throw ourselves into the struggles of our time *consciously and strategically, so that even in defeat we still have a trajectory or life project to see through to the end*. The second proposal regards how we might use the novel itself.

*"The mirror reflects the years all at once, but there's still a quickness in the eyes. Something that must have flashed on the barricades of Münster, or among the peasant armies of Thuringia. Something that wasn't lost along the journey, because the journey couldn't kill it. Madness? No, but as Perna put it: the desire to see how things will end."*

Agency is a difficult thing. It can fall into your lap when you least expect it and evade the most fanatical who desire it. The protagonist of Q is thrown into a historical situation beyond his choosing and control, but within that space he finds opportunities to act. His choices, however, lead to horrors just as often as to liberating experiences; every night he is haunted by the ghosts of his slain comrades. **It is not until the end of the novel that he is able to reflect on his past and choose his battles and actions consciously**, carrying on his life project even into old age to "see how things will end" in a way of his choosing. The stories of the Münster commune and Jan Van Batenburg offer a sobering warning to radicals who fixate on violence and destruction as ends in themselves [ed. – see *'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'*]. We can reject the degeneration of revolt to a matter of mere military force without dismissing our desire for a new world or rejecting the need for force to make that desire reality.

*"In the fog of diffuse dissent you can really cover some ground."*

In the final section of Q, the protagonist and his comrades begin distributing a book called "The Benefits of Christ Crucified": "a cunning little book, designed to stir up endless hornets' nests, because it's ambiguous in its content and expressed in a language anyone can understand. A masterpiece of dissimulation, and it's

*already causing all manner of dissent."*

Though the content of the book is not particularly radical, they breathe radical life into it by presenting it in heretical sermons and putting it into the hands of the right people. They use the book to spread revolt, draw out their enemies, and give themselves space to avoid and escape the Inquisition. **This book, of course, is a metaphor for Q itself.** Mirroring its ambiguity and cunning, Q is written in the simple style of an action novel and published by corporate publishing giant Harcourt, yet it contains an undeniable glimmer of radicalism that makes it perfect for us to use for our own ends.

*"I smile. No plan can take everything into account. Other people will raise their heads, others will desert. Time will go on spreading victory and defeat among those who pursue the struggle... We deserve the warmth of baths. May the days be aimless. Do not advance the action according to a plan."*

1. Luther Blissett is a "collective identity" used here as a nom de plume by four Italian authors, who've since continued writing under the name Wu Ming. For details about the exploits of those who took on the name Luther Blissett and now Wu Ming, try [lutherblissett.net](http://lutherblissett.net) and [wumingfoundation.com](http://wumingfoundation.com).

2. Of the numerous historical accounts of this period of revolt and radicalism, Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Friedrich Engels' *The Peasant Wars*, and George Huntston Williams' *The Radical Reformation* offer good starting places – though Cohn and Engels especially view these events through authoritarian lenses of their own.

3. Having read a little on the metaphysical controversies of that era, your grumpy editor fears that Q does not adequately explore the religious beliefs of the rebels it depicts. From a philosophical perspective, this is a missed opportunity, though it would take a very different book to take this on; from a historical perspective, one could charge that this amounts to a refusal to engage with the radicals of that day on their own terms. [ed. – Indeed, one of our main take-aways from this profound novel was a critical look at how much Western radical tradition clings to the Christian heritage and worldview depicted in that era... but that's a topic for another day.] Of course, Q was intentionally written as an action novel, which limits its philosophical and historical potential but perhaps opens up other possibilities.

4. Editing this review late at night in the convergence center for the protests at this year's Democratic National Convention, I can imagine the protagonist stumbling in unnoticed, white-haired and wizened, to witness the foolishness of the latest generation.

5. Discussion of the protagonist's relationship to various wealthy merchants, and what this means in the context of both the metaphor and story itself, is beyond the scope of this review.

6. The authors are reported to have taken steps to remedy this in their more recent work.

# THE DARK MONTHS ARE COMING

The dark months are coming and I await them eagerly.

I cannot wait to hide in the darkness, to become invisible, to become myself. The dark is comforting, like a mother, holding me in its embrace. It nourishes my soul, heals it, and makes it whole again.

It is at this time that I feel the pull of nature, of the great outdoors the most. **I love all seasons, but these darker months are mine.**

I can hear my woods call to me, can feel it. It is an urge that must not, no, cannot be ignored, and so I pull on my boots and whistle for the dogs, and together, witch and hounds, we set off.

The sky is a tumult of grey, boisterous clouds, heavy with the promise of rain. I can smell the ozone. I love this place, where I live the most on days like these, always have. I don't know why, except that maybe because it seems to match this council estate.

"The concrete jungle," people call the street on which I live... when they are being nice. It, and its residents are the butt



of all jokes. When you tell people where you live they struggle to hide their distaste and hold onto their bags a little tighter, as though my living there makes me a criminal.

I suppose it does, to some.

I love these people. They are mine. Weed dealers, single mothers, struggling families, terrible teens already disillusioned with life: the estate is a veritable melting pot of life's downtrodden. I trust these people. These people will argue with you, fight with you, but I trust them.

"During this time of year, every day is shorter than the last; darkness claims an ever increasing portion of our existence. The trajectory can be discouraging; we may come to feel estranged from the sun. The winter solstice is the point when that changes; when darkness yields to light and the days gradually grow longer. [O]ur projections and forecasts are always uncertain. To suggest otherwise is to reduce reality to a simple machine – perhaps civilization's favorite metaphor – where each event follows the next as a matter of course, where the ending is predetermined and wholly predictable, where we have access to the whole of its operations. But if reality must be likened to a machine it is of the black box variety where we have nothing but observed inputs and outputs and very little beyond speculation as to its internal churning. We may at times be able to predict the output but, in ways both better and worse, are regularly mistaken and surprised. Given the number of doomsday scenarios and apocalyptic visions currently in circulation, the fact that we are often mistaken should be understood as a source of hope and encouragement. There are more variables at play than we can possibly be aware of and so our nightmare visions may not come to pass. To give up hope and abandon resistance is to treat humanity as an all-knowing deity rather than as an animal operating with limited knowledge and finite senses.

[...] I have faith that the sun will return..."

– *The Faith of a Green Anarchist*

come and work in these giant grey windowless behemoths for a wage that doesn't stretch, doesn't even cover the basics.

The dogs pull for they know the way, are eager to swap the concrete for grass and soil. These woods are theirs too, and they know they can be free, if only for a while. We turn a corner and, snuggled between more grey buildings, is a narrow gravel track. We follow it, past yards of piled tyres and rusting machinery.

**On each side, the trees, sparse at first, grow thicker and denser, the path steeper, until you finally reach the top, a big wide meadow. The tall grass is yellowing and soon it will die back, but for now the dogs disappear in it. They reemerge, running and nipping one another, playful things, enjoying the simple pleasures of being free, with the wind in their faces and the grass beneath their feet.**

I sometimes think we could learn a thing or two from dogs. How to be free. How to be content with our own naturalness.

I follow them slowly, lost in the beauty of this place. It's not a secret, but it feels like it is today. There is no one, other than myself and the dogs here, on this grey and gloomy day. Finally, I can breathe.

The churning of the industrial state, 'productivity', can still be heard if you listen for it, but it's easy to block it out, ignore it. The sounds of nature take over.

Kestrels circle overhead, hovering every so often, uncannily still in the air.

Rabbits hurry to find cover, but the dogs are oblivious to them; they are still too far away, and there are too many scents that delight their noses between them and the rabbits. I sometimes think that dogs have got it right. Look how happy they are to be outside, to be free; to just enjoy the fresh air in your face.

The track leads into the woods, a narrow opening between crowded trees. **It's not a big woods, but it's mine**, and not the straight rows of man-planted pine common in so many areas.

We slip off the track, disappear into the trees and it's like a different world. Hushed, but alive. The moss covered trunks of hawthorn and birch and oak rise from the ground, and I let my hands linger across them as I move past them, deeper into the woods.

Devils Woods this place is known as. I don't know if that's the official name, but as kids we would come here, and Devils Woods it was then, and is now. They've tried to reclaim this wildness, it is now run by a trust. The work they do is good to be fair, without them these trees would no doubt have been torn down, replaced by more of the housing or industrial estates that ever seem to creep closer.

### **But they also want you to stay on the track, and tracks are not for me.**

The dogs dart here and there. They love it beneath the trees and I let them run. They will not stray, ever the faithful friends.

I'm nearly there now, my clearing. Others have been here, they leave the remains of campfires, rubbish too. I pick up the rubbish, and can feel the thanks of this land. Then I sit down and just be. No meditation or ritual today, though it almost kind of is.

Here I can just be. I feel the power of the earth beneath me, can feel the spirits of land and tree and animal. **I wonder if more people knew this, could feel this, would they do more to protect it?**

We are connected to this land, to this earth.

*Find your spot and protect it.*

The threat of fracking [ed. – see **Return Fire vol.4 pg14**] creeps ever closer to my town. We can't look to the local authorities to protect us, because even when they try, Big Government slaps them down<sup>[1]</sup>. So much for *democracy*.

I won't let it happen here, or anywhere in my town, and to stop it will take action on all fronts, magical and mundane. **I will fight. Fighting is second nature to me. I relish it. But I must do more, as must we all.** It is all of our responsibility, don't we all rely on Mother Nature [sic]?

I close my eyes and breathe deeply, take in the smell of the soil, the scent of the woods. I can feel my strength returning, the healing of my soul, and know that it is time to go, even as I wish I could stay for hours. Time to go and put on my many masks, go back into the world of man [sic].

I call the dogs, and they know, but relish every moment of their freedom, and come running past me and back out onto the tracks, back through the meadow and onto the gravel track. Back into the world of man and commerce and impositions. Back to the forty hours of mindless work a week for wages that do not stretch.

I am of this land, I am of these woods, I am of the rivers and the oceans and the sky and the stars. We all are. Never forget it. It is our strength, this knowledge, this truth.

Rediscover your own wildness and you will rediscover yourself.

1. ed. – See **Return Fire vol.4 pg18**. As well as the Lancaster drilling sites this is in reference to, last month Third Energy were scheduled to be high-volume fracking North Yorkshire "on or after 26th October", the first time in the U.K. since exploration at Preese Hall led to small earthquakes in April and May 2011. As we prepare to print, in a landmark case the petrochemical giant Ineos has secured long-term sweeping U.K. court injunctions against those opposing fracking, leaving them liable to be jailed, fined, or have their assets seized for acting in defence of (amongst other things) drinkable water, clean air and the very stability of the land beneath our feet.

## **NATURE DEVOURS PROGRESS & EXCEEDS IT**

The midday sun skins alive the specters that couldn't hide in time. Their bones turn into violins and grate on the ears of adventurous men lost in the forest, imitating a Roman emperor's decadent court.

Tongues of fire, flashes of breasts, reflections of blue pass through the half-light full of vampires. One can walk. The ground has the air of a brain that would like to appear as a sponge. Silence weighs on the ears like a gold nugget on the hand, but the gold is softer than an orange. And yet, the man is from that side. He has opened a corridor in the green, and all along this corridor he has stretched a telegraph wire. **But the forest quickly grows tired of embracing this cord that gives nothing back but a human voice**, and the plants, thousands of plants, more enthusiastic and insatiable than the others, have rushed to smother this voice under their kiss; then silence falls back over the forest like a rescuing parachute.

**There, more than anyplace else, death is merely a temporary way of being of life, which disguises one side of its prism so that the light is concentrated more brilliantly on its other faces.**

The skulls of the ruminants offer cover, among the great trees threatened by thousands of creeper vines, to the nests of birds that reflect the sun on their wings, the leaves on their throats. And fleck of blue sky throb on corpses that metamorphose into a mound of butterflies.

Life fights with all its might, in all its time, marked by swarms of mosquitoes on the water's face. **Life loves and kills, caresses what it adores with a murderous hand.** Seeds sprout like trip-hammers, implacably nailing the ants that devoured them, and to which they may owe their terrible power of germination, to the

ground. Blood calls the sobbing flowers back, and the flowers kill better than a pistol. They kill the pistol.

Where genesis has not yet said its final word, where earth only separates from water to generate fire in the air, earth and water, but especially where earth and water, terrorized by celestial fire, make love night and day, in equatorial America, the rifle drives away the bird that it doesn't kill, and the snake crushes the rifle like a rabbit.

**The forest has fallen back before the axe and dynamite, but between two railway crossings, it has thrown itself on the tracks**, addressing the train's engineer with flirtatious gestures and tantalizing glances. Once, twice, he will resist the temptation that will follow him all along the route, from a verdant railroad tie to a signal hidden by a swarm of bees, but one day he will hear the call of the enchantress who has the look of a beloved woman. He will stop the engine for an embrace that he desires in passing, but the embrace will be endlessly prolonged in accordance with the perpetually renewed desire of the seductress. Though mute, the siren still knows how to draw her victims irretrievably into the abyss of no return.

Thus, the slow absorption begins: piston rod after piston rod, lever after lever, the locomotive goes back into the forest's bed, and from voluptuousness to voluptuousness, it moistens, quivers, moans like a lioness in heat. It blackens orchids, its boilers give shelter to crocodiles' playthings that blossomed the day before while legions of tiny birds live in the whistle, giving it a chimerical and temporary life, since quite quickly the forest's flame will swallow it up like an oyster, after having licked its prey for so long.

In the distance, slow skyscrapers of trees will erect themselves to express a challenge impossible to gather.

## sources if not already cited: (anonymous if unlisted)

### English-language anarchist news & information exchange

**Act For Freedom Now!** (Greece & global) [actforfree.nostate.net](http://actforfree.nostate.net)

**Anarchist Library** (multi-lingual, open-source catalogue of print-ready texts) [theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)

**Anarchy, Secession, Subsistence** (rejoining rebellion with the land) [anarchysecessionsubsistence.blogspot.ca](http://anarchysecessionsubsistence.blogspot.ca)

**Anarchy Radio** (streaming and downloadable hour of global news and anti-civilisation analysis, every Tuesday) [johnzeman.net/radio](http://johnzeman.net/radio)

**Avalanche** (web presence of international correspondence publication about and from sites of social tension; each edition available multi-lingual) [avalanche.noblogs.org](http://avalanche.noblogs.org)

**Attaque** (France, multi-lingual) [attaque.noblogs.org](http://attaque.noblogs.org)

**Bordered by Silence** (France) [borderedbysilence.noblogs.org](http://borderedbysilence.noblogs.org)

**Chronik** (Germany, multi-lingual) [chronik.blackblogs.org](http://chronik.blackblogs.org)

**Contra Info** (global, multi-lingual) [contrainfo.espiv.net](http://contrainfo.espiv.net)

**Montreal Counter-Information** (Canada, bi-lingual) [mtlcounter-info.org/en](http://mtlcounter-info.org/en)

**Non-Fides** (France & global, multi-lingual) [non-fides.fr](http://non-fides.fr)

**Oplopanax Publishing** (a cache of handsome and engaging printable zines) [oplopanaxpublishing.wordpress.com](http://oplopanaxpublishing.wordpress.com)

**Resonance Audio Distro** (various readings as MP3s plus source files) [resonanceaudiodistro.wordpress.com](http://resonanceaudiodistro.wordpress.com)

**The Brilliant Podcast** (deeply thoughtful questioning on key topics for radicals) [thebrilliant.org](http://thebrilliant.org)

**Uncivilized Animals** (writings on ecology, technology and society from an anti-industrial perspective) [uncivilizedanimals.wordpress.com](http://uncivilizedanimals.wordpress.com)

**Untorelli Press** (an archive and publisher of radical pamphlets against capitalism, patriarchy, the state and civilisation) [untorellipress.noblogs.org](http://untorellipress.noblogs.org)

**Warrior Up** (sabotage techniques) [warriorup.noblogs.org](http://warriorup.noblogs.org)

### 'Tools of the Technology'

– from 'Between War & Retail Meltdown'

### 'A Smart New World of Slaves'

– from 'Between Karoshi & Surplus'

### 'The Exarchia Commune Rises & Defends Itself'

– by Paul Z. Simons a.k.a. *El Errante*

### 'Combative Solidarity'

– from 'Come Out to the Streets of Fire', by Open Assembly Against the Police Occupation

### 'Symbiogenetic Desire'

– by Bellamy Fitzpatrick

### 'The Pond'

 – from 'Ecology and Man: A Viewpoint', by Paul Shepard

### 'A Green Anarchist Critique of Science'

 – by AutumnLeavesCascade

### 'The Matter of Knowing Who We Are'

– from 'Social War, Anti-Social Tension', by *Distri Josep Gardenyes*

### 'Anarchist Relations in Practice'

 – from 'Coordinating a Gift Economy', by PG, Fifth Estate #395

### 'Pirates vs. Corsairs!'

– by J. Vinagre

### 'An Enemy of the Desire to Create'

– from 'The Revolution of Everyday Life', by Raul Vaneigem

### 'The Origins of Victimation'

– by Alfredo Cospito, in *Croce Nera Anarchica* #2

### 'Fraud, Fantasy & Fiction in Environmental Writing'

– by David W. Kidner

### 'On Reasonable Grounds'

– from 'Notes Towards a Political Ontology of "Environmental" Conflicts', by Mario Blaser

### 'The Colonial Census'

– from 'Ethnic Politics as Integration', by Andy Robinson

### 'Q'

 – from Rolling Thunder #6

### 'The Dark Months are Coming'

 – by Emma Kathryn

### 'Nature Devours Progress & Exceeds It'

 – from *Machete* #1

*back cover* – Emile Armand



"Long live  
the weeds  
and the  
wilderness  
yet."

– Inversnaid

PDFs of this or previous  
volumes of Return Fire and  
related publications:  
[actforfree.nostate.net](http://actforfree.nostate.net)  
[/?tag=return-fire](http://actforfree.nostate.net/?tag=return-fire)